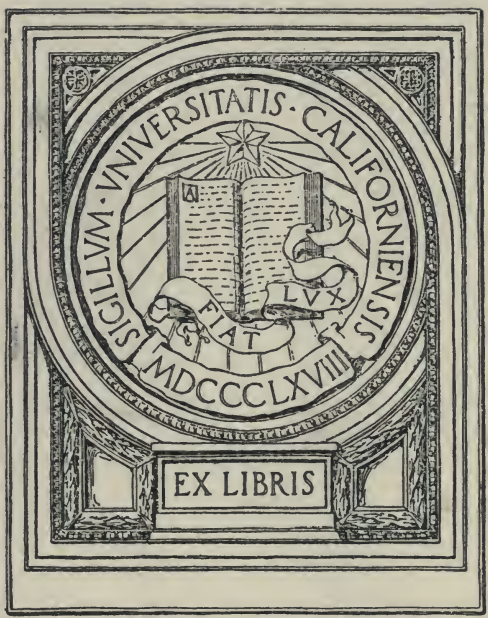
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THE CONVICTIONS OF CHRISTOPHER STERLING

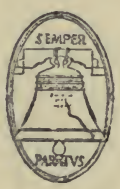
THE CONVICTIONS OF CHRISTOPHER STERLING

A Novel

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

"It should be the aim of a wise man neither to mock, nor to bewail, nor to denounce men's actions but to understand them."
—Spinoza.



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PREFACE

Having to overcome one's human feelings for the sake of the Fatherland is the horrible in War, but in that lies its greatness. Its sublime majesty consists just in this, that in War one murders without passion.

The German Treitschke.

That it may please Thee to preserve all that travel by land or by water, all women laboring of child, all sick persons and young children, and to show Thy pity upon all prisoners and captives . . . . .

The English Liturgy.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

AT no time in my life, if the reader will allow me to make a personal statement, have I held those difficult principles which govern the Quaker in his attitude to War. Moreover, such is the character of my feeling for England that I have never been able to contemplate the noble ideal of internationalism without some measure of distrust, so sharp is my fear that British nationalism, which after all is simply the political expression of British character, may suffer hurt in the processes of any such fusion.

This being my natural disposition, from childhood up I have hated all forms of despotism, feeling this instinctive hatred to be the island center of my Englishness. The least act of tyranny, and in particular petty tyranny, has ever moved me, in spite of all my many moral shortcomings, to immediate anger.

Therefore when I heard in the winter of 1917 that Quakers and Tolstoyans, because of their resistance to military service, were being treated with a cowardly and shameful rigor by our British authorities, it was a natural instinct with me, although I had assisted the Government to get men to the Colors, and although I was entirely convinced that Germany must be defeated in the field before Prussianism could be destroyed in Europe, to attempt a protest.

I made myself master of the facts, and then, as soon as possible took impulsive steps which might lead, as I hoped, to the removal of this detestable reproach from our English name. Those steps, however, brought me at once to a dead wall. I could find no newspaper, not even the most Liberal, not even those which had been accused of pro-Germanism, to publish my protest. I called that protest "The Mouse in Chains." Editors wrote kind, friendly, even sympathetic letters, but expressed various reasons for not helping in this particular way to rid the mouse of its chains. I published an appeal to working men in the pages of *The Herald.* I signed powerful petitions to the Prime Minister, and from time to time wrote letters to eminent men among my acquaintance; nothing came of these efforts.

It occurred to me, meditating on this failure to relieve human suffering, and haunted by the knowledge that men whose shoelaces I was unworthy to tie, lay at the point of madness and death in our cruel prisons, that it would be some service, however indirect and small, to set forth the antithetical ideals of nationalism and religion in the form of a story. I hoped in this way not only to secure humaner treatment for the realistic Christians in jail, and not only to strike a blow for the reform of our mechanical prison system, but perhaps to feel my way from a nationalism which could not safely be religious to a religion which might preserve the great sanctities of nationalism.

The story, thus suggested, formed itself in my mind as a study in contrast. I conceived the idea of taking

two brothers who should represent ideal patriotism and ideal religion. There should be in the book suggestions of materialistic patriotism and of compromising religion, but the central contrast should be in the clear and resilient air of the ideal.

One of my protagonists was to express some such resplendent passion for England as inspired Rupert Brooke: the other, some such reverence for the letter and spirit of Christ as inspired the great Saint of Assisi. I determined to hold with a steady hand the balance between these two temperaments. I would neither exalt the patriot nor denounce the Quaker. My novel should not be marred, one way or the other, by the destroying spirit of propaganda. The honesty of my own agnosticism would preserve me, I hoped, from any shadow of dogmatism. Nevertheless, throughout the pages of this little book should breathe, if I was true to myself, such a spirit of liberty as would surely make the most implacable enemy of Prussia as deeply ashamed of ill-treating a Quaker in an English jail as he was burning with disgust against our ruthless enemy for the ill-treatment of British soldiers in German prison camps.

So my tale was written.

PART I

THAT WHICH WENT BEFORE

CHAPTER I

THE END OF A JOURNEY

ONE winter's evening, early in the present century, a two-wheeled carrier's cart turned in at the stables of a shabby tavern in Calais. It was one of those vehicles which you still see on the country roads of Europe going from the village to the market-town, sometimes with a netted calf or a pig at the back, high wheeled, heavily timbered, badly hung, with long rigid shafts, and pulled usually by some stout old horse, good-looking enough, but which has forgotten how to trot.

On the seat of this cart were two men muffled up in their top-coats, with a rug over their knees, which was heavy with snow. One of these men was a French peasant from the neighborhood of Bergues, who made a little extra money as a carrier; the other was a young Englishman on his way home after two years' wandering on the Continent.

"It's a rough house, as I warned you," said the driver, lifting his chin above the collar of his coat after

he had pulled up the horse in the dark yard of the inn.

"It will serve," replied the other.

"Well, that is for you."

The yard would have been as black as pitch but for the smoky lamps of the cart and a blood-red patch of light in a glass-paneled door at the side of the inn. Outside on the cobble-stones of the narrow street the snow was churned up into a yellow mass, but here in the shelter of this ill-smelling yard it lay smooth and deep, shining with a wonderful purity. From the stables came the stamping of horses' feet and the rattle of rack chains; from the inn, the subdued sound of human voices; from the street outside, the roar of the deep sea swinging under a savage wind and a flurry of snowflakes.

The carrier got down from the cart, taking the rug with him, which he flung over his horse's back. The horse let its head fall, and began to snuff at the snow.

"I'll see if they have a bed," remarked the carrier, dragging the horse into greater shelter. "If not, there's another house up the street." He walked towards the inn, unfastening his coat.

The young Englishman stood at the horse's head, holding his bag and his stick in one hand, stroking the animal's nose with the other, while the carrier, after kicking off the snow from his boots, mounted the three steps to the glass-paneled door through whose scarlet curtain the light within shone upon the yard. This door led straight into the kitchen, and directly the car-

rier opened it there came to the yard a loud clatter of pots and pans, a din of voices, and the rich smells of animal flesh sizzling in oil.

"Have you a bed for to-night?" asked the carrier, standing in the door. "It is not for me," he hastened to explain; "but for a stranger I picked up on the road."

The landlord, who was reading a newspaper at the table, looked towards his wife busy at the fire. "Yes, we have a bed," she answered, turning her head but continuing to stir a pot on the fire; "it's in the same room as this gentleman's, if he has no objection." She indicated by a backward nod of her head a stout German seated at the table before a bowl of soup.

"I have no objection," said the German.

The carrier withdrew, shutting the door behind him.

"There is a bed for you," he said, coming into the yard, "and supper is cooking on the fire; you had better go in and get warm."

"When we have taken out your horse," replied the Englishman, and setting down his bag he began unbuckling the straps of the harness. "It was kind of you to give me a lift," he continued; "and I hope you will be my guest at supper."

"Oh, as for that, I need no thanks," replied the carrier, rather gruffly; "and I must say that you made the miles fly pretty quick with your talk. It would have been longer and colder without you, that's a certainty."

By the light of one of his lamps the carrier found

an empty stall for his horse, and after making him fast to the rack, he bade the Englishman go into the inn and prepare for supper while he saw to the feeding of his animal.

The Englishman crossed the yard, mounted the steps, and entered the kitchen of the inn. This kitchen, full of tobacco smoke and steam from the pots on the fire, was low ceiled, with rough worm-eaten rafters which had been whitewashed, and with a floor of cement broken in many places and everywhere splashed and stained. There were several doors such as you might find in a fowlhouse leading from this kitchen to other parts of the house: one to the scullery, where taps were dripping into the sink and a slatternly girl was hard at work washing plates and dishes, one to the bar of the inn, one to the larder, and one upstairs to the bedrooms.

The landlord, looking up from his newspaper, appeared to be much surprised by the character of the guest, lowering the paper quietly, narrowing his eyes, and staring at this young stranger with a heavy curiosity. His wife, turning her head from the pots and pans on the fire, also seemed surprised by the quality of their guest, for after frowning upon him some moments, she told her husband to get a candle and take the gentleman to his room.

In spite of his clothes, which were of a rough character and exceedingly worn, it was impossible to mistake this young Englishman for one of the usual

patrons of the inn. There was something so handsome in his appearance, something so distinguished in his manner, and something so refined and gentle in his voice, that every one in the kitchen was instantly aware of a new event, conscious as it were of an adventure. What strange fate, they asked themselves, had brought this handsome young man to such a hostelry?

When he had gone from the kitchen, following the slippered landlord up the stairs, a fisherman smoking his pipe on a bench by the wall exclaimed to a neighbor that the foreigner was evidently an Englishman.

"So long as he pays," said the other, "what does it matter?"

"We want no English here," said the landlord's wife; "they are a race of thieves and hypocrites. But this gentleman is an Austrian. I can tell by his accent."

"By his accent!" said the German at the table. "But he spoke French like a Parisian."

"If he is not an Austrian, he is a Russian," said the woman.

The door opened and the carrier entered.

"It is cold," he said, rubbing his hands. "And it snows like the devil. Where is the stranger?"

"He will be here soon," replied the woman. "How is your wife?"

"She is still no better. The doctor says I should

take her to Paris, but that means a lot of money, and what is to become of the children in the meanwhile?"

"Just so," said the woman.

After some gossip about the village from which he had come, the woman asked the carrier to tell her what he knew of the stranger he had brought with him.

"He is a wonderful man, this Englishman," began the carrier.

"English!" exclaimed the woman, turning sharply about, a spoon in her hand dripping on to the cement floor.

"What did I say?" demanded the fisherman, shifting proudly on the bench.

"From the moment I picked him up till the snow came down and made talking impossible," continued the carrier, stretching his hands over the fire, "he has told me such tales as never I heard—tales of the wonders of the world, of what the surgeons can do with the inside of a man's body, and of what electricity can do with machines, and how the Christians in Armenia are butchered by the Turks, and how the Serbian women work in the fields, and about the happy life people live in Bohemia. He has seen much, this gentleman, and I should say he was a great scholar into the bargain."

"Still he is English," objected the woman.

"Oh, they are not all bad, these English," said the fisherman.

"The English," said the German, "are the greatest people in the world. I too am English."

"What!" cried the woman, turning about. "You, English? I know better. You are a German."

The German smiled, pushing his soup plate away, and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "I was born in Germany," he said, "but I make my living in England, and now I am going to be English always."

At this point the landlord returned to the kitchen.

"That is a pleasant gentleman," he remarked. "In my young days I entertained many such. I love a man with fine manners and a gentle voice."

"He is English," said his wife.

"What!" The landlord stood, transfixed. He was a corpulent, round-shouldered man, with a troubled red face, protuberant sad eyes, and a ferocious mustache. His hair stuck up and hung forward over his forehead.

"The carrier has told me," said his wife.

The landlord spat on the floor. "Blast him! if I had known it he should have found his own way to his bed. English! Who would have thought it?"

"He'll pay fair and square, what does it matter?" demanded the fisherman.

"Matter!" cried the landlord; "it matters to me because I love my country. These English are the enemies of France. They hate us. Listen what their papers say." He marched over to the table, snorting, took up his journal, turned the sheets over, and pres-

ently began to read. "This is what one of their newspapers says in London: 'France shall be rolled in mud and blood.' Curse them, that is how they speak of us—in mud and blood! 'Her colonies shall be taken from her and given to the Germans.' Do you see?—they will steal our colonies. They hate us and would have us ruined. We are to be rolled in mud and blood, and we are to be brought to beggary. Why? Because we wish to manage our own affairs without interference from England, and because we do not keep our mouths shut when she is murdering the Boers. The swine!"

"Ah, they are hateful, these English!" said the landlord's wife. "And you," she added, addressing the German, "would become one of them!"

"But you are German," said the landlord.

At this point the Englishman entered the kitchen. He was tall, well-knit, and held himself with an easy grace, free of all stiffness. The handsomeness of his face came from a combination of singularly good features and serious intellectual capacity, molded into a very attractive pleasantness by the gracious modesty of his spirit. He had a quantity of dark brown hair, which was brushed back from his forehead and rippled at every inch or two, catching light and shining richly. He was clean-shaven. His eyes were large and dark, burning with a wonderful lustre under straight brows. There was a certain element of weakness in his mouth, which was too pretty for man-

fulness; and his chin, though strong enough, was entirely lacking in force. His face was the face of a youth who had been sheltered and protected from childhood and was now finding his own way across the frontier of manhood.

An awkward silence greeted his entrance into the kitchen, and he stood for a moment at the foot of the stairs, looking about him. Then, setting down his candle on the dresser, he crossed the room to where the carrier was seated, and said to him: "We are to eat together, and I expect you are as ready as I am for a good supper."

"Yes, I am hungry," said the carrier.

The German, who was making a great noise eating a ragout, said to the Englishman: "We share the same room. I have no objection."

The Englishman smiled, and made a little bow.

"I have buried my mother," said the German, "and to-morrow I go home. I also am English."

"Then we shall travel together."

"I live in Walworth. I have a fine shop there. By trade I am a baker. All my children are fine and strong. They too are English."

"Indeed."

"I was born a German, but now I am English."

"You prefer the life of England?"

"Because I am a democrat. England is a good country for free people. It is a country where he who works hard may enjoy what he earns. I would

not go back to Germany for anything in the world."

"And yet there are very kind people in Germany, who are quite happy?"

"Yes, but they are not free. I must be free or I should die. In Germany the common people are better educated than they are with us in England; they have more self-respect; they are cleaner in their habits; but they are very poor—the Government is their master, and they are not free. I was born a German, but I shall die an Englishman."

This conversation, unintelligible to the other people in the kitchen, gave an increasing offence to the landlord and his wife, who, although they could not understand a word of it, objected strongly to the sound of English in their kitchen.

"You English," said the landlord, "had better be careful what you are about."

This remark was addressed rather to the French people in the kitchen than to the young Englishman, for the landlord in making it looked from the fishermen to his wife, and from his wife to the fishermen, opening the newspaper as he made it and smacking the sheet with the back of his hand. "We Frenchmen," he continued, more truculently, "do not like insults. When we are insulted, we get angry."

The young Englishman, who did not seem to be in the least perplexed by this sudden onslaught, said to the landlord, "You have read something in the newspaper which has made you indignant?"

The landlord passed him the paper, pointing with his finger to the quotation from a London journal: "You are being beaten by the Boers in South Africa, a little nation of farmers, and yet that is how you dare to speak of France," he said, getting up, and walking to the fire. He stood beside his wife, glaring at the Englishman.

"If we had known you were English," said his wife, "there'd have been no bed for you here, I can tell you that."

"This is horrible," said the Englishman, putting the paper aside. "I am sorry that any of the least of my countrymen should write so vilely. I can understand your feelings. Indeed, if after reading such a gross insult as this you feel that my presence here is unwelcome to you, I will go away. I perfectly understand that you must resent my presence at your table."

These words, delivered in the most perfect French, and with an obvious and deep sincerity, produced an instant change in the landlord's wife. "You need not go," she said; "for I can see you are different from some others, but we do not like being talked to like that, as you can imagine." She told the landlord to get some bread for their guests, and herself carried the pot of soup to the table.

"To be told," expostulated the landlord, coming to the table with a yard of bread in his hand, "that we are to be rolled in mud and blood, and that our colonies are to be torn from us—this is more than an

insult; it is a threat, and our Government must answer it." He banged down the bread on the table, and walked back to the fire, snorting.

"It is journalists who make wars," said his wife.

"I say it is a threat!" continued her husband. "We are to be rolled in mud and blood. We Frenchmen are to be knocked down, and our colonies stolen from us. What is that but a threat? That is how Englishmen speak of France in London. And in Africa, their army is being smashed up by brave little Boer people."

"You must consider," said the Englishman, "that what is written in that paper is one man's opinion, and you must assure yourselves that in England there are many who love France and who reverence her genius and who are just as indignant as you are, justly indignant, at such horrible sentiments so vilely expressed."

The carrier said that he had met very few Englishmen, but did not doubt that some of them were friendly and civilized. The landlord's wife repeated her opinion that wars were made by journalists, adding that she could wish all newspapers were under the control of Governments. Under his breath the German baker said to the young Englishman, "These French chatter like so many monkeys; take no notice of them."

The landlord, however, was in a fighting mood, and no civility on the part of the Englishman could subdue his annoyance. He sat down at the table and

began a long tirade against England, declaring that all her colonies had been gained by stealing; that her wealth was the wealth of piracy and murder; that she had always been the enemy of little nations; that she had ever set the great nations by the ears in order to save herself from rivals; that she had no real friends in the world, and but for her navy would be fallen upon by the nations and punished for her crimes.

From this he went to the Dreyfus case, justifying the action of France and denouncing England for daring to interfere in a matter which belonged to France and to France alone. When he had satisfied himself on this head he opened fire on the subject of the Boer War, charging England with hypocrisy and cowardice in that attack upon the liberties of a peaceful people, declaring hotly that but for the gold in the Transvaal there would have been no war.

By this time the kitchen had filled up with a number of rather rough-looking men who sat about smoking and drinking, their fierce eyes bent upon the young Englishman, their anger stirred up and their patriotism gratified by the eloquence of the landlord. There were loud murmurs of approval whenever the landlord threatened that France must take up this latest challenge of the pirate England that their beautiful country was to be rolled in mud and blood and her colonies taken from her.

All this time the German kept whispering into the

ear of the Englishman that these people were very bad-mannered and extremely ignorant, saying that England was the greatest country in the world and that her greatness made these degenerate Latins jealous. "Take no notice of them," he kept repeating; "they are ignorant, and a Frenchman must talk or explode."

Every now and then an expression of such deep melancholy passed across the Englishman's face that the landlord's wife, regarding him from a chair beside the fire-place, concluded he must be in love. She ceased to think of him as a politician or as a representative of the hated and perfidious Albion. Her woman's nature asserted itself and she thought to herself that he was wonderfully handsome, as romantic looking as Byron, and that some girl in England was breaking his heart.

Of a sudden, getting up from her chair, she exclaimed angrily to her husband, "Oh! what a row you are making, with your politics. A fine passion you are in, to be sure. And what good comes of all this talk? Let us have a song, if only to cool your blood before you go to bed. This gentleman is very polite and must think you are a brigand to go on as you do. Come, Jean, give us a song."

The man she addressed as Jean was sitting at the table with a glass of white wine before him. He threw back his head at her invitation, and said with a dramatic gesture, "Well, let us sing the *Marseillaise,* if

ony to cheer us up before this young gentleman proceeds to roll us all in mud and blood."

There was laughter at this, and the Englishman, turning to the speaker, said to him very agreeably, "I hope you will allow me to join in, for I love that fine song of yours. It belongs to all who want a good world."

This remark put everybody into a better mood, and by the time the song was finished even the landlord felt more pleasantly disposed towards the stranger, so heartily had he sung the song.

When he rose to go upstairs to his bed, the slattern of the scullery hurried to light his candle for him, and every one in the kitchen was pleased because he went round the room shaking hands with them.

At the door of the staircase, candle in hand, he turned and addressed the whole room: "What fools men are," he said, with a boyish smile which was in odd contrast to the grave tone of his voice, "not to realize that they are brothers. Your *Marseillaise* is not the battle song of France but the marching music of all humanity. Good-night my comrades; a better world to all of us!"

CHAPTER II

THE EYES OF THE DEAD

"WHEN I buried my mother," said the German next morning, "I buried my Germanism. At the grave of that dear old woman the tears burst into my eyes and rolled down my cheeks into my beard, a sob rose from my heart and broke from my lips; for I was thinking of how she had once been buxom and young, and had carried me in her arms, and had fed me at her breast—this white-haired, shriveled, and bent-up old dame who was now dead, nailed up in a coffin, and slid down into the sandy earth, there to lie for evermore, one of thousands of millions. Yes, I wept at the grave, and my relations led me away afterwards, with their hands pressing my arms. But I thought to myself when the paroxysm was over, and every man must weep at the grave of his mother if he has a heart in his bosom, I thought to myself, 'Good! no more am I a German: this is the end: I have buried my birth and afterwards for ever I am born again, an Englishman.'"

He was full of excitement and pleasure at the thought of returning home to his shop and his children.

On the boat he paced to and fro, blowing out his chest, laughing at those ridiculous Frenchmen of the tavern who had dared to abuse England, boasting of the great British Navy, and at the first sight of the cliffs of Dover bursting out with a pæan of patriotism. But most of all he talked about his own little home in Walworth, where he felt himself to be a king. He told his companion every detail of his family life, and gave him a long account of his own history. This German, whose name was Pommer, like most of his countrymen, was a sentimentalist, and he showed the Englishman the photographs of his children which he carried about with him, describing each one with enthusiasm, tenderness, and a half-chaffing pride.

"As for my wife," he said, "she is English; and while I love her, as every husband should love his wife, I see that she is not so capable as the majority of those fat German women. She is very dear, but she is also very stupid. I have been anxious all the time I have been away, because of my shop. Even at the grave of my mother I was disturbed. You see, my wife is not clear in the head. She makes mistakes with the orders; she gives wrong change; she cannot add up the books correctly; and she does not know when the bakers are spoiling the bread and the cakes. But you will like her. She is a lady. And as for the children, she takes such pride in them you might think they were the children of the Lord Mayor. You must come and see us."

When these two travellers, each carrying his own

bag, were passing up the train at Dover looking for seats in a third-class carriage, a man who was settling with a porter at the door of a first-class carriage, seeing the young Englishman pass, put out his hand and stopped him. "Surely, you are Sterling of Balliol?" he said with a smile.

The Englishman stopped. "And you, of course, are Wentworth. I remember you very well."

They spoke for a few minutes together, and then Sterling followed after the German baker, while Wentworth entered his carriage.

"Who is that odd-looking bird you were talking to?"

Wentworth laughed. "I hardly recognized him," he said to his companion who had asked this question. "You'd never guess, would you, that he's the heir to old Anthony Sterling, and about as clever a fellow as ever took a First at Balliol?"

"Anthony Sterling the banker?"

"Yes."

"A great fellow. I honor him because he keeps the flag of English finance flying in the midst of Jewry. He's the Pierpont Morgan of England! He won't give in to the Jews. Well done, old Sterling! And this is his son! He looks more like a German student. Why on earth does he wear a steeple-crowned hat?"

"He was always untidy," replied Wentworth. "But, by George, he's a clever fellow! He came up from Eton with a tremendous reputation, and he beat everybody of his time at Oxford—easily. He told me

just now that he has been wandering about Europe for a couple of years. 'Looking at pictures?' I asked him. 'No,' he said, 'I've been looking at people.' 'What do you make of them?' I asked. He said that he had come to the conclusion that most people in the world are unhappy. A rum fellow! I expect he'll go into politics. He was always a bit of a socialist."

"That won't suit his father, will it?"

"I shouldn't think so."

In their third-class carriage, higher up the train, Sterling and Carl Pommer were getting better acquainted with each other. By the time they reached Charing Cross this feeling of acquaintance had warmed on both sides into something akin to friendship. Pommer felt that his companion was one of those students who need the guidance of practical men before they can hope for material success in the world, and he began to consider whether he might not engage Sterling as a bookkeeper, using him of an evening as a tutor for his boys.

Sterling, for his part, was genuinely interested in this hearty, childlike person who had risen superior to local patriotism and made a deliberate and quasi-intellectual choice of the Government under which he would live. He saw in this kindly German baker the hope of a wiser Europe, the promise of a world-State.

When Pommer suggested at Charing Cross that Sterling should come with him then and there to see his family in Walworth, Sterling replied that, as no

one was expecting him at home, he would gladly do so. Accordingly he left his bag in the cloakroom of the station, and went off with the baker to Walworth.

There was some one in London whom he wished to see, and yet feared and dreaded to see—some one of whom he had been thinking for these two years of wandering in Europe, sometimes with a sick hunger of the heart, and sometimes with a curious dissatisfaction.

It struck him as odd, perhaps as symbolical, that, instead of hastening to this beautiful and brilliant girl, he should be going off, with one who was yesterday unknown to him, to visit a baker's shop in Walworth. Across his face there deepened at that moment the same expression of melancholy which had led the innkeeper's wife in Calais to conclude he was in love.

Pommer's shop had the appearance of a challenging prosperity. It stood out from all its neighbors. The brass below the window shone like gold: the window itself, with its white enameled lettering, was as bright as the brass: and the contents of the window, arranged in sloping trays, suggested an inexhaustible profusion. Over this fine window, in big capital letters was the name Pommer, with the flourishing description of baker, pastrycook, and confectioner. Sterling was amazed to find so splendid a shop in such a draggle-tailed neighborhood.

At the bustling entrance of Pommer, a pleasant-looking woman, who appeared to be much worried

over a column of figures in a big ledger on a desk at the window end of the counter, broke into a smile, colored up redly, and exclaimed, "So you've come back then! Well, this is a surprise!"

Pommer, who was bubbling over with love and pride, and who was uttering deep cooing sounds, lifted the flap of the counter, passed through, dropped his bag, spread his arms wide, and embraced his wife.

"Oh, lor," she exclaimed, "your beard's full of sea salt! Don't go on like this, with people passing the window. Behave yourself like a sensible man."

"Excuse me, my dear friend," said the baker over his shoulder, regarding Sterling with damp eyes; "I am trying to keep myself from tears. It is like heaven to come home. We have never been separated before."

While he was saying this, Sterling observed that his eyes were regarding everything in the window and on the counter with a professional anxiety.

"And the children, how are my little children?" he demanded. "This gentleman has come all the way from France to see them. He is my friend. He is Mr. Sterling. My friend, this is my dear wife whom I adore. Ach, look at those buns! They are no good. I will speak to that lazy Smith. And business, has it been good? Yes, yes; that's all right. Pretty good, eh? I will make it all right—quite all right!"

Sterling was taken into the parlor behind the shop, and when the children came in was introduced to them by Mrs. Pommer, Carl Pommer having gone off to the

bakery to give it hot and strong to that "lazy Smith."

"They look healthy, don't they?" demanded Mrs. Pommer. "But of course Walworth is a very healthy place, I'm sure it is. There's no keeping them clean as you can see. I send them out in the morning like new pins, every one of them, and this is how they come home. It's playing about does it. But there, as I say to their father, children will be children; you can't help that."

When Pommer came in, very red and fierce-looking from his encounter with Smith, Sterling heard all about the attainments of these children. The eldest boy was to be a doctor; the second would go to a technical college and then into engineering works: the third, a girl, intended to be a teacher: the fourth, a diminutive genius of five, showed signs of musical ability—he would probably be apprenticed to Bechstein's. Pommer became radiantly happy in speaking of his children, and at the end called for a jolly tea.

Because of his homecoming and Sterling's presence, the tea which Mrs. Pommer placed on the table was a meal of the most generous character. You could scarcely see the white tablecloth for dishes of brown bread-and-butter, white bread-and-butter, jam tarts, sugar cakes, delicate rolls, muffins, and buttered toast spread with bloater paste. The children behaved excellently. Pommer made an admirable host. Mrs. Pommer, in her effort to be thoroughly ladylike, was a little trying, but kindness itself.

Sterling left these people with a feeling of great friendship towards them, promising, and meaning to keep his promise, to come and see them again. When he was in the cold and bitter streets, where an east wind was blowing and where the pavements were coated with a thick sleet, it seemed to him that he had left behind him in that baker's shop a successful solution of the problems of life.

He went back to Charing Cross for his bag, and then taking a cab drove to his father's house in Portman Square. The house was shut up. The caretaker told him that the family had gone down to King's Standing, their place in Surrey, but that a bedroom had been kept ready for him in case he should arrive. He went up to this room, unpacked his bag, and after he had washed his face and hands, walked through the empty and desolate rooms of the house for some moments, as though tortured by unrest. Then he went out into the streets.

He walked swiftly through Oxford Street, crossed the road, and made his way by side streets to Berkeley Square. His eyes brightened at the sight of lights in the windows of a house on the west side of the square, but when he came opposite the door of this house he stopped dead, stood for a moment irresolute, and then turned away.

"It is too late to call," he told himself. But at the corner of the square he turned and walked back. The thought of his empty home, with the furniture in curl

papers, afflicted him with a feeling of melancholy. He went to the door of the house at which he had stopped, and rang the bell.

As he followed the servant upstairs to the drawing-room he was conscious above every other feeling of a deadening fear. He was afraid of what he should discover, of the changes time and temptation might have wrought in a nature to which he had once felt himself to be irresistibly drawn, and yet a nature which he had always feared. Throughout his life, ever since he came to thoughtfulness, there had been this duality —passionate impulses of inarticulate feeling and a purely intellectual circumspection inhibiting those impulses. He had never been conscious of a unity in his character. Life appeared to him as a baffling problem because he had never been able to see it from a single standpoint.

The drawing-room was full of people. In front of the fire was a group of women bidding goodbye to their hostess; at the piano a man was seated talking to two girls who stood at his side, one of them turning over a piece of music on the rest: close to them a man and girl were practicing a new step in dancing, laughing rather noisily; and at the extreme end of the room there was a party of older people playing bridge, with two or three onlookers seated between their chairs.

When Christopher Sterling entered the room, one of the girls standing at the piano, uttering a glad ex-

clamation and shining with pleasure, almost ran towards him, both her hands stretched out in welcome. This impulsive welcome, so sincere and flattering, had an immediate effect on Sterling. His eyes lighted, eagerly his hands went forward to meet the girl's, and he held them firmly, bending forward to her with admiration and affection.

"You dear thing!" she exclaimed; "you dear thing!"

"How nice of you to be so glad," he made answer.

"Glad? I'm intoxicated! Mother, Christopher's come back."

A little, wiry, mouse-like woman, dark-haired, sharp-nosed, and with blinking eyes, had broken away from her guests on the hearth at the first sight of Christopher and now stood beside her daughter shaking his hand with a rare heartiness, looking up at him with an affection which was frank and endearing.

This little woman, who was as sharp as a fox, as hard as a diamond, and as stimulating as a cold bath, who could be as generous to her friends as a philanthropist and as uncharitable to those who most needed her generosity as a miser, who loved her world and wanted no other, who was liberal and delightful with those she liked, and bitter and stinging to every one else, was a Mrs. Fanning, daughter of Lord Charles Warburton, and wife of Joseph Fanning the shipowner. She was notorious in society for her uncertain temper, her political violence, and her bitter tongue, but she could be so amusing that a great many people

liked her, and her house in town was regarded as one of the centers of the Liberal party.

When her guests had departed, she made Christopher Sterling draw his chair close to the fire, and smoking a cigarette on the sofa proceeded to question him on his travels, interrupting almost every answer he made by a fresh question or a comment which either approved of his opinions or dismissed them before they were quite uttered. On the other side of Christopher was Mr.Fanning, a big and solid person, very slow of speech, with an expression of countenance which suggested a compromise between intellectual austerity and a troublesome dyspepsia. Between Christopher and the fire, seated on a big purple cushion, her face turned towards him and her eyes heavy with an affected interest, was the beautiful Violet Fanning, who had greeted him so impulsively.

Christopher's glances were divided between Violet and her mother. He was conscious of an increasing unnaturalness as he talked to Mrs. Fanning, as if she were forcing him to be not his real self, and of a slow, deep, and pervading disappointment as he looked at Violet.

This world which greeted him in London did not seem to be a world in which he could breathe freely: he was oppressed and awkward; all the impetuous happiness which had visited his heart so suddenly and so delightfully at his entrance was now gone from him. He felt himself to be a foreigner. The language of

these people was not his language; their customs were not his customs; their outlook was not his outlook, and probably, if he went deep enough, their God was not his God.

"Your father says you must have been living by your wits," laughed Violet, making an effort to be interested.

"What does he mean by that?"

"You spent so little money."

"Oh! I see."

Mr. Fanning said that he only wished his own children had the same fault.

"How you spent your father's money," said Mrs. Fanning, "is of small consequence compared with how you intend to spend your own future."

"I wish I could manage the one as easily as the other," said Sterling.

"But why did you spend so little money?" demanded Violet.

"I haven't the least idea what I spent," he answered, with a smile; "but I expect it wasn't very much. You see, I kept away from the beaten track, and I never spent a single night in a popular hotel. I enjoyed myself in taverns and inns, and very often I stayed in the houses of priests or peasants, who were amazingly hospitable and full of information. I did a good deal of my traveling, too, on foot, or in diligences, and very often in wagons and carts, getting a lift on the road. When I went by train I traveled third class,

not only to avoid tourists but in order to meet the people of the country. I dare say it's true what my father says. When I come to think of it I must have spent uncommonly little money; it's extraordinary how well one can do in Europe with a few pounds."

"And now?" demanded Mrs. Fanning.

He looked at her.

"How do you propose to travel now?" she asked.

"That's the bother."

"You'll go into the bank?"

"I don't think so."

"For a few years?"

"No; I don't think so."

"Well, into Parliament?"

"What for?"

There was a pause. Violet looked away to the fire, disappointed in Christopher—he was always disappointing her. Mr. Fanning smiled to himself, liking that question of Christopher's, *What for?*—he thought it was an admirable answer. Mrs. Fanning regarded the heir of Anthony Sterling with a marked disapproval.

"I mean," said Christopher, "it's useless for a man to go into politics until he has discovered the remedy."

"The remedy for what?" demanded Mrs. Fanning.

"All the muddle of things."

"Christopher," she said, "there's one thing you must make up your mind *not* to be; you may be almost anything you like, but *you must not be odd.*"

He smiled. "That's my risk, isn't it?"

"And it may be your ruin."

"And yet," he said, with some energy, "no one could be more out of sympathy with cranks. I met a lot of them wherever I went, and they seemed to me wasting their time over details."

"Life is simple enough," said Mrs. Fanning with decision.

"I feel that it ought to be."

"It's quite simple when one sees that it's a question of evolution."

"The bother is to decide its direction."

"In English politics you see the whole business of life reduced to its simplest elements," answered Mrs. Fanning. "You have the Socialists who want to jump progress; you have the Tories who want to hamper progress; and you have the Liberals who want progress to move at its own natural pace. You must be a Liberal. You must go into Parliament, and you must work with your party. And above everything else you must enjoy life. For heaven's sake don't take it too seriously. If you do, you'll be lost."

Violet, stifling a yawn, leaned back from her cushion and looked up at the little gold clock on the white mantelpiece. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed with sudden energy; "it's nearly eight o'clock, and we aren't dressed." She put out her hands to Christopher. "Pull me up," she said; "I'm dog tired."

He rose to do her bidding.

"You'll stay to dinner?" asked Mrs. Fanning, gathering up her bag and some letters. "It doesn't matter about changing; and we're all alone to-night."

Christopher made his excuses. He had a number of letters to write.

Violet said good-bye to him without any warmth.

He went out into the wintry weather with a strong feeling in his mind that during the last hour he had made a definite break with the past. There was no sadness in his heart. He was disappointed, but the disappointment had been expected. This beautiful girl, who attracted him so powerfully, belonged to a world which she loved more than any creature under heaven, and it was a world which he felt to be a dying and a dull world. He was aware that she did not feel for him any deep affection, that he did not really interest her, that the romance of their first attraction for each other had long ago departed from both their hearts.

If he had felt strong enough to rescue her from that perishing world which satisfied her and engaged all her ambitions, he would have made the attempt to take her heart by storm. But the trouble with him was this, that he had no other world to which he could carry her. He was looking for that world, and it might be many years before he found it: in the meantime she was of her world, more and more its prisoner.

He went through the streets with a sense of loneliness in his heart. His love for Violet, which had some-

times seemed to him in his absence from her the greatest force in his life, was now nothing but a disappointment. He did not suffer any sharpness of pain under this disappointment; but he was aware of a new solitude in his heart, a strange emptiness, as if it was a familiar room from which some one in his absence had removed a favorite picture.

"Guvnor," said a hoarse voice at his elbow, "could you spare a few coppers for a bed? I'm perishing with the cold, straight I am; and I've eaten nothing since yesterday morning. For God's sake, give us a few coppers."

He turned and looked at the miserable wretch slinking at his side, with humped shoulders, chattering teeth, and hands chafing each other in front of the hollowed chest, the crafty eyes glancing everywhere for a policeman.

"Is it so hard to get work?" asked Sterling.

"Guvnor, I've been round the markets, I swear to God I have, every day this last three weeks, and as true as I'm a living man——"

Christopher stopped.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked. "You're an Englishman, and you live like an ownerless dog. Why do you do it?"

The wretch came closer to him, protesting he was an honest man and willing to work, declaring that no work was to be had, and that there were thousands like him out of work through no fault of their own.

"And look at me," he cried bitterly, his teeth striking each other, his whole body convulsed with cold, "I've been soaked through with snow and rain for three days, soaked to the bone, and with no soles to my boots, and nothing under this coat but a vest which was worn out a year ago."

Christopher gave the man some silver, and said to him, "You will never be warm and you will never be happy until you feel you would rather die than be as you are now. Try to get back your self-respect."

The man said, "Self-respect! Why, what chance have I had? Listen, guvnor; my mother was drunk when I was born, and I was shifting for myself in the streets before I was six years old. Self-respect! What chance have I had? But don't you worry about my being warm! I'll be warm and happy to-night all right thanks to you I will."

And with that he ran across the road, hugging his rags together, and laughing with a rare pleasure.

"Warm and happy to-night," reflected Christopher, "and to-morrow——?"

For some moments he thought about this encounter, dwelling on it as though it were a problem presented to him for solution; but presently his mind returned to Violet Fanning, and the beggar slipped out of his consciousness.

He wondered whence came the extraordinary beauty of Violet's eyes. She had no loveliness of mind, no fineness of spirit. Intellectually she was third-rate,

spiritually she hardly existed; and yet those great eyes of hers were superb in their beauty. He said to himself, "Those eyes do not belong to her; they are inherited from some one: they are the eyes of a dead woman who loved greatly: Violet is using them, and their beauty will fade because her spirit is unworthy of them; they will become dull, hard, expressionless." The thought stayed in his mind that he had never loved this girl, that his love was for some dead woman whose eyes looked at him from Violet's face, and he fell asleep wondering who this unknown woman had been.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTOPHER'S TELEGRAM

"WHAT do you think, my dear?" asked Mr. Anthony Sterling, coming back to the breakfast-room with the *Times* newspaper dragging in one hand, and an open telegram in the other.

"I can't imagine," replied his wife, from behind the coffee-pot.

"I know!" cried Arthur, brandishing a kidney on his fork; "the bank rate has gone up."

Old Mr. Sterling stooped his head and over the rims of his eyeglasses, surveyed his family with paternal pride. They had come down, in their various degrees of laziness, several minutes late for breakfast, with the exception of the eldest of them there, Langton the soldier, who had gone for a run in flannels while the others were asleep. But they were such handsome and pleasant children, and his wife looked so thoroughly happy sitting among them at the round table in this green-and-gold breakfast-room, where a cheerful fire was blazing away with all the energy of a cold morning, that old Mr. Sterling had no other feeling towards them than one of deep affection stiffened by pride.

He was a man above the middle height, clean-shaven, with a fine scholarly face, his hair graying and thinning, his complexion pink and fresh. When his lips parted he showed excellent teeth, and when he smiled a light of great kindness came into his pale blue eyes. The interesting quality in his face was its extreme gentleness: there was a complete absence of rigidity: the mobility of his lips, which were seldom still, suggesting rather fastidiousness of mind than shrewdness of intellect or intensity of purpose. As he stood there, surveying his family, the whole face seemed to glow with affection.

There was Langton, eighteen months younger than Christopher the scholar, a smart soldier lately gazetted to a smart regiment of Lancers, the soul of honor, disposed towards religion, and a great sportsman; there was his only daughter, Sibyl, a most attractive specimen of English girlhood, cultured and refined, and a lover of all healthy sports; there was Arthur of Balliol, a rowing man and no doubt the future Lord Chancellor; and last of all there was James, still at Eton, sunning himself in the reputation of the brothers who had gone before him, a most lovable boy, gentle and gracious, remarkable already for his knowledge of music and painting, a universal favorite because of the sweetness of his nature.

Through the mind of old Mr. Sterling, surveying his family over the tortoiseshell rim of his glasses, there flashed the thought of his great fortune in having those

children hale and strong under his roof, not one of them exposed to the hazards of war in South Africa. He hated war. There was Quaker blood in his veins, and he hated it with a double hate, the hate of the religious man who abominates all violence, and the hate of the born money-maker who knows what disturbance, and what peril, war introduces into the delicate mechanism of finance. To know that this wretched business in South Africa was likely to be over before even his soldier son could be exposed to its risks, warmed his heart. How lucky he was to have this young family safe under his roof!

"I know!" cried Mrs. Sterling, jumping up with excitement, and pointing a finger at her husband; "Christopher is back."

The banker beamed with pleasure. "Your maternal instinct, my dear! He is arriving by the 11.45."

There was a shout of delight from the rest of the family. "Dear old Christopher!" was the commonest exclamation.

Mrs. Sterling rang the bell. She was one of those admirable English women whose intelligence is as sound as their health. She was intellectually superior to most women of her class, and with this refinement of mind and a very sure taste she combined a vigorous devotion to field sports, still riding to hounds, and playing as good a round of golf as a game of tennis. She was just under fifty—brisk and alert, with a fine head, and a face of no little handsomeness.

When a servant answered the bell she gave instructions for the dog-cart to be round at the door at a quarter past eleven, and for Mr. Christopher's room to be made ready and a fire lighted there.

"You will drive to meet him, I suppose?" asked the banker.

"Of course."

"You might tell him that I have had a table made ready for him in my room at the bank."

"What are you going to pay him, father?" demanded Arthur. "Ten thousand a year and his washing?"

Mrs. Sterling, who had approached her husband, looked at him a little sadly. "I'm afraid you may be disappointed," she said, quietly.

"One of my sons must follow me," said the banker. "If not Christopher, then James."

"Good old James!" cried Arthur, smacking his brother on the back, and almost choking him as the boy, who was blushing a good deal, tried to swallow a mouthful of coffee.

"I believe James will make a great banker," said Langton, from the other side of the table.

"We'll all borrow money from you," said Arthur, pretending to cuddle him up.

Mrs. Sterling was still looking at her husband. "I think we must make up our minds," she said, "that Christopher is going into politics."

"I hope," Sibyl remarked, "that he won't be stupid about Violet Fanning. She's deteriorating every sea-

son. It would be a disaster if he married her."

"Lend me a tenner, dear old fellow," whispered Arthur into the ear of James. "I'll give you a bill for it drawn on Bombay at sixty days' sight payable on delivery, E. & O. E."

Old Mr. Sterling and his wife went out of the room together.

"You are very happy?" he asked, giving her the telegram.

She smiled, nodding her head.

At the door of the library he stopped. "And where are you going now?" he asked.

"To get some flowers for his room."

CHAPTER IV

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS EXPERIMENT

CHRISTOPHER remained at home till after the new year. It was not until the evening before his departure that he disclosed his plans for the future, and then only to his mother. Up to this moment he had been under the spell of the happiness of his family, telling them about his travels, listening to all their stories, and entering into most of their games. He was not so interested in Langton, the religious soldier, who thought him one of the finest fellows in the world, as in his youngest brother James, whose very beautiful nature made a special appeal to him. He went for several walks with this schoolboy, and listened to his confidences with a kind of reverence which perhaps Langton would not have been able thoroughly to understand.

But it was easier for him to talk to his mother than to anybody else, and he told her a good many things every day which prepared her for his final announcement. She alone realized the nature of the conflict in his soul. To most people, his gravity and his reticence appeared as part and parcel of his reputation as a scholar, and they never thought of attributing to this

unusually quiet and modest young man anything in the nature of a spiritual conflict.

"So you are really going back to London to-morrow?" Mrs. Sterling asked him.

"Yes, to-morrow."

They had gone away from the others into the room which had once been the children's schoolroom, a little upstairs apartment, which Mrs. Sterling now used as a sitting-room for herself. They had gone to this room knowing that they would speak intimately to each other, a look from Christopher's eyes telling her in the midst of festivity downstairs that he had something to say to her, and a look from her eyes telling him to follow her from the room.

A certain awkwardness held them both.

"This fire will soon be out," she said, stooping to the fender.

"Let me see to it," he said, taking the poker from her hand.

She went over to the window and drew the curtains closer together. "It's not too cold for you up here, is it?" she asked coming back to him.

"No, not a bit; and the fire will soon be burning all right."

"Your father knows that you don't want to go into the bank," said Mrs. Sterling, sitting down and taking up some knitting from a work-basket beside her chair.

"I'm afraid I've disappointed him." "Well, of course he would have loved to have you with him."

"I think I should have disappointed him still more if I'd joined him."

"You are not quite sure, are you, about politics?"

"Not quite."

"What do you think of doing in London?"

"My idea is rather to study things at close quarters."

"What sort of things?"

"Human things. I want to live among the worst we've got and see why it is they are what they are."

"That's not a bad preparation for politics."

"My idea is that you can't know people by visiting them; you've got to live with them, exactly as they live, to find what's wrong with them, or rather what's wrong with our organization of society."

"You mean, you want to live in the slums for a bit?"

"Yes, I thought of it."

"My only objection to that would be that these are the best years of your life, and it seems rather a pity to spend them on observation instead of on something like real action."

"You see my trouble is that I don't feel at present as if I know enough to act. I should like to act, but how? That's my bother. I'm trying to understand life. As soon as I seem to get a fairly good definition, something comes into my vision which upsets it, makes it a fallacy. And then I have to begin all over again."

"Don't you think, perhaps, that it is because you are looking for the opportunity of heroic action, action on a very big scale, that this difficulty arises? I mean, if

you were to content yourself with action on a moderate scale and in the usual field of action——." She stopped knitting and looked up at him.

"Yes, that's true."

She saw that her eyes disconcerted him, and once more went on with her work. She said: "Of course it's part of your niceness that action which satisfies most men does not appeal to you. You've no small aims in your mind, and no limited horizon to your vision. The trouble is, knowledge came too easily to you. You never had to grind, like Langton and Arthur. I remember your first governess saying to me that she never had to put anything into your mind, that everything she wanted to teach you was there, and all she had to do was to get it out. 'And it comes out,' she said, 'in a flood.' That was quite true. You remember how easily everything came to you at Eton. And you used to tell me that you never really worked like other men at Balliol, and yet look what you did there. Well, the penalty of such intellectual ease is vagueness and uncertainty of aim. You don't want to be a judge, or a general, or a minister, or an ambassador, or a bishop. You don't want a prize of any sort. You've never worked as a boy to succeed, and so as a man you don't know what to be at. Your difficulty, I think, will be to set before yourself some definite aim, and the harder it is the better it will be for you."

"The hardest thing of all," he said, "is to be a Christian."

"Yes, I should say that was difficult."

There was silence for some moments, and then she said, still without looking at him. "I didn't know you were particularly interested in the Christian religion."

"I don't think I am. I mean, I'm not interested in the church. Langton rather bores me with his churchmanship."

"Yes, I fear he regards me with a good deal of pain."

"You're not interested in religion?"

She stopped knitting and looked at him: "Not in the Christ of the churches," she answered; "no, not in the least. I don't understand Him, and I don't understand what the churches understand by Him."

"That is how it is with me," he said.

"I daresay religion of that kind is very useful for certain people, and I'm sure it's helpful to a great number. But what it means I haven't the least idea. The creeds seem to me, as intellectual statements, to be meaningless, and the ritual of the altar an extraordinary jumble of barbaric superstition and pagan symbolism. In the midst of all this, the historical Jesus seems to be lost, and the being they call Christ seems to be a shadow."

"It's the historical Jesus who interests me."

"He will always interest us."

"I have an idea that if he should ever become real to mankind it would put everything right."

"Yes, I think that's true; but you may be sure that

neither church nor government will ever let him become real; he's far too dangerous."

"What an upheaval it would be!"

"Tell me," she asked, "is this idea of Jesus working itself into your politics?"

"I suppose it is."

"Mind you, that's going to be very dangerous to your career."

"I know."

"You are at the beginning of your life, and a step aside into the wilderness may be fatal."

"But a man must know what he would be at before he sets to work."

"I'm not at all sure that he'll find what he wants in the wilderness. However, your mind is made up about that. You are going into the slums to observe. All I would say is this, don't stay too long and don't break your connections with the other parts of society."

"Of course it's only an experiment. I'm anxious that there shouldn't be a fuss about it in the family."

"I'll see to that."

"I knew I had only to tell you my idea——."

"I quite understand."

When they parted he said to her that he thought of taking up his quarters in Walworth, and told her something of the Pommer family.

She laughed over his description and said that she must certainly make the acquaintance of that remarkable family.

"You aren't disappointed about me?" he asked.

"Not disappointed," she answered, "but a little anxious."

"You think I am wasting precious time?"

"Yes, and in rather a dangerous way."

"Why dangerous?"

"I feel it to be dangerous."

CHAPTER V

MRS. STERLING BECOMES ANXIOUS

ONE day soon after Christopher's departure Mrs. Fanning and Violet came down to luncheon with the Sterlings, inviting themselves. Violet disliked Langton because of his absurd churchmanship, but felt that Arthur had the making of "a nice boy." She amused herself between Arthur and Sibyl, flirting with the one in jocular fashion, and attempting to make the other jealous by a recital of all the delights she had been enjoying in London.

Mrs. Fanning's business was with Mrs. Sterling. She felt that Mrs. Sterling ought to be told that Christopher was in danger of fooling away his life. She was convinced that no one could perform this delicate office in a more tactful way than herself. If it could be done, she would save Christopher to society. She found a vigorous ally for her cause in Langton Sterling, the Lancer.

"Well," she began, "Christopher has gone to live in the slums."

"Deplorable, isn't it?" exclaimed Langton.

"It's so unoriginal," she cut in.

"I argued with him for hours," said Langton.

"And he wouldn't listen? The monster!" Then, jerking round to Mrs. Sterling, "What do you think about it?"

"It's rather early to judge, isn't it?" replied Mrs. Sterling.

"Ah, of course, you'd never say one word against Christopher, would you? No; not though your heart was full of fury against him. But, my dear Elizabeth, this kind of Tolstoyism, and that's what it amounts to, this kind of religious and political *mousse*, is going to ruin his digestion for daily bread. Mark my words. And what a dreadful waste. Think of his parts. Think of his reputation. Instead of making use of that reputation he's dallying with the impossible, and when he has found out that it is the impossible his reputation will be forgotten. He'll arrive in the House of Commons like any ordinary carpetbagger."

Langton disliked this woman, but he cordially agreed with her views.

"I told him," he said, with energy, "exactly what you are saying now; I pointed out to him that all protestantism and nonconformity are only so many side turnings from the broad road of history. But poor old Christopher, with all his brilliant learning, has always lacked a governing commonsense. I think it is because he was never keen on games. He has none of the instincts of a sportsman. He is the soul of honor, a most noble fellow, but he lacks vigor of will. His

personality, so to speak, is always in a muse."

"Why don't you," asked Mrs. Fanning, addressing herself to Christopher's mother, "insist upon his joining you when you come back to town, if only for two or three days a week? He ought to go out to parties, meet people, mix with his own world, and associate with men of his own standing. I feel he will waste his life, a life we are all so proud of, if he persists in this craze. And how dull and old-fashioned it is! People have been slumming for the last ten years, and what has come of it? So far as I know nothing at all."

At this point a servant entered the room with a telegram for Langton. He took it, and opening the envelope, began to support Mrs. Fanning's views, only glancing at the message as he spoke. But of a sudden he stopped dead, a look of great pleasure came into his handsome young face, and he exclaimed, "What splendid luck!"

With that he rose from his chair, told the servant there was no answer, and going over to his mother said to her, "It has come at last, what I've been longing for."

"Your regiment is ordered out?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Fanning said, "I congratulate you, Langton. How delighted you must be!"

"Nothing," he said, "could please me so much, not even the news that dear old Christopher had chucked the wilderness."

His mother asked him when he would be going. He replied that he must start at once.

"In that case," said Mrs. Fanning, "Violet and I will get out of your way. I quite understand your joy, but all the same it's a beastly war."

"Don't say that!" he made answer.

"But I do. It's a perfectly beastly war, and I wish it were well over."

"I call it one of the hopefullest of wars," said Langton. "It means the destruction of a provincial protestantism, and the baptism of a fine people into a great moral imperialism. I believe the Boers will be a magnificent people when they're under our flag."

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" replied Mrs. Fanning; "we are fighting the Boer because there's gold in the Transvaal, and because our moral imperialism and our catholic religion are represented out there by a lot of scoundrelly Jews. All the same, I hope you'll give the enemy a good beating and come back with any number of ribbons."

Her last words to Mrs. Sterling concerned Christopher. "Get him back," she said; "feed him well, take him to see bright people, surround him with pretty girls, give him 'a good time,' and save his soul."

Violet was standing at her mother's side.

"I'm sure he'll ruin himself," she said, laughing. "He gets more and more serious. And he used to be such a dear."

When they had gone, and Langton had taken his

departure, Mrs. Sterling sat down beside the fire to some needlework.

She found that her anxiety for Langton was not great; that Langton indeed did not occupy her thoughts, but that Christopher did — Christopher the son of great promise, the first-born, the child of her deepest love.

This practical and efficient woman began to be profoundly anxious. Was there not a chance that Christopher might become that most intolerable thing a crank? — a dreadful possibility that he might never return from the slums? She knew that he was far too rational a man to become a fiery prophet of revolution; nothing in the slums would ever make him a demagogue, even of the highest kind; but he might stay there, looking on, until it was too late to return.

Langton had said he lacked a governing commonsense. That was only partially true. He had considerable commonsense, and this commonsense governed him far too much for her liking; but it was not the commonsense which commended itself to Langton. It was not the commonsense of compromise and conformity; it was the commonsense of a rational, a severely logical mind. It would be as difficult for Christopher to fall into line with any party of politicians or any set of men, as it would be for Langton to throw up his commission or abandon his church.

But Langton had been right in this, that Christopher lacked something. Did it come from solitary study

and a physical incapacity for games? Would it have been there, saving his soul, if she had forced him to join in all the games and sports of the family, instead of leaving him under a tree or in a chair by the fire, reading, reading, eternally reading?

What was it he lacked?

She thought it was Will. It seemed to her, as she thought about him, that he was without any central intention, any drive of personality. How was this to be given? Could it be given by the world of which Mrs. Fanning had spoken, by the world of gaiety and amusement, of pretty women and cheerfulness, the world which had the one central intention of enjoying itself? No, that was a foolish prescription, characteristic of the woman who gave it.

But there was another world. There were men and women in society who turned their backs on the frivolous round, who were interested in serious matters, who possessed great intelligence, and who gave themselves to the service of their fellow-men. She thought of two or three men in politics, and of several women she knew in London whose lives were refined and beautiful. She wondered, in thinking of these people, why it was she had no hope that they would interest Christopher. Was it because their seriousness promised no salvation to mankind?

Sibyl entered the room.

"I hope you are not worrying about Langton," she said, coming to her mother's side. "He would be

frightfully wretched if it ended before he got out."

"No, I'm not worrying."

"Father's tremendously upset."

"I'll go to him."

"He says he feels that the family is breaking up, that the past which has been so jolly has come to an end; he has been talking to me in the study; he told me that Arthur asked him if he might enlist."

"Arthur?"

"Yes, he's mad to go. It isn't because he wants to fight like Langton for something or other, but because he says he'd love to have a whack at the Boers."

"What did your father say?"

"He wouldn't hear of it."

"I should think not."

"All the same," said Sibyl, "if I were a man I should feel horrible at staying behind; wouldn't you?"

"I suppose I should. But Arthur is too young. One son is enough."

"I hope Langton will come back with a Victoria Cross."

"I hope he'll come back. That will be enough for me."

"Of course. But I mean it would be jolly, wouldn't it, if he made a tremendous name out there?"

"Yes, of course it would. I'll go down and see your father. Where's James?"

"Don't tell any one. He's writing a poem in his bedroom."

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTOPHER BEGINS TO TELL

AT the conclusion of the war in South Africa, Christopher was still living in a back street of Walworth, studying social conditions.

In other members of the family there was change. Langton had come back from the fighting a better soldier than ever, and now commanded a troop in his regiment, which had greatly distinguished itself. He was much more of a man, quieter and gentler, with a certain nobility of mind which made itself felt even among the frivolous. He did not talk so openly of his church, but he was more deeply devoted to it than ever, and took trouble to see that the men in his troop were given the chance of intellectual and moral improvement. He was so excellent a sportsman that this religiousness was not resented by his brother officers. Sibyl was engaged to be married. No one could have better pleased the family than the man of her choice—a very good fellow indeed, and so devoted to country life and the development of his estate that no city had been able to hold him long enough to befog his commonsense.

Arthur was settled in the Temple, developing with extraordinary rapidity into a very fashionable man of the world. His knowledge of restaurants was almost comparable with that of the late Colonel Newnham Davis; his youth, good looks, cheery temper, and money made him a favorite with several distinguished young people in the theatrical world; he was becoming a leader among a certain set of golden youth. His father said of him that he should never quite abandon hope of his salvation so long as he manfully withstood the temptation of wearing an eye-glass.

James had just gone up to Oxford, and was as modest and charming as ever, but rather inclined to wear careless ties and to let his hair grow longer than Langton considered either healthy or correct. He was, however, so entirely unconscious of these things that he offended no one by his eccentricities. There was a feeling in the family that he was marked out by nature for distinction in literature.

Although profoundly thankful for Langton's safe return from the war, so thankful that unknown to anyone but his wife he gave a thousand pounds to the hospital fund, old Mr. Sterling viewed all these changes in his family with a poignant regret.

"Ah, my dear," he would say to his wife, taking her hand and holding it affectionately, "all our joys lie in the past, never to return to us. How jolly it all was when the children were young! I've seen many families, but none ever came up to ours for unity and affec-

tion and simple happiness. From the day of Christopher's birth it was heaven on earth. I used to think sometimes of the day when the young ones would fly away and leave us alone, but I never imagined it would be as bad as this. How they all hung together! What beautiful children they were! And now the world has got them, and they are scattered, all scattered."

He told her on one occasion that unless James came into the bank he would find it very hard to go on. "Christopher has left me, apparently for nothing; Langton has left me for the army; Arthur hates finance and thinks he will make a figure for himself at the Bar; there's only James left—and he's writing poetry."

"But you used to write poetry, too," she interrupted.

"Mine," he replied, "was the poetry out of which men grow; but James's is the poetry which is born in the soul and goes on growing for ever. I'm very much afraid indeed that he has got the root of the matter in him. We have had literary men in Lombard Street, to name only Samuel Rogers and Walter Bagehot, but I have grave doubts that James is not of their robustness. He strikes me more and more as too feminine for finance; I feel that he has something of Shelley in his soul. That would never do in Lombard Street."

"Arthur ought to have joined you," she replied; "perhaps he will in the end."

"No. Arthur has no soul. He's a delightful animal: I'm immensely fond of him: but to love the mystery

of finance, and so to understand it, a man must have a soul like a priest. You have no idea how full of mystery is this business of banking. The rise and fall of prices—if one could only solve that baffling problem! But I'm boring you. I fear there's a danger that I may become a crank. You must take me to a theater. What a pity that Penley is not here to make me forget that our children have flown away from us, and that the past is the past."

One day he asked her to go and see Christopher and to persuade him, if possible, to return from his long sojourn in the slums. "Try to get him back to us," he kept saying.

Mrs. Sterling had been on several occasions to see Christopher in his lodgings, and on almost every visit had endeavored to get him home to his own world; but she felt now that the time had come when she must speak to him with real directness, even perhaps going so far, so unfairly far, as to appeal to him. She set off in a resolute frame of mind.

When she arrived at those dismal lodgings, Christopher was out. The very slatternly but kind and quite cheerful landlady, invited her to enter, saying that if Mrs. Sterling would like a cup of tea while she was waiting, why, it wouldn't take her a minute to pop on the kettle and boil a little water, that it wouldn't. Mrs. Sterling said she would prefer to wait for her son's return.

These rooms of his were furnished, thanks to his

mother, with some degree of taste. She had gradually succeeded in displacing the furniture of the landlady with more serious articles, and had also provided a new wall paper, a carpet, and some pleasant hangings. It was a good-sized parlor on the ground floor with folding doors to a somewhat smaller bedroom at the back.

Here Mrs. Sterling waited for half an hour before Christopher returned.

He had grown much graver, and had lost everything of youthfulness. He was inclined to stoop, walked without spring, and spoke with an increasing slowness, weighing all his words. His face was still extremely handsome, but without softness of any kind; it was the face of one who suffered, of one who was weighed down by a burden. But the greatest change in his face was the appearance there of strength, as though his diffidence and self-distrust had retired before the slowly assembling forces of his will—his will or another's which controlled him.

For some months now he had been acting as tutor to certain young men in that dismal neighborhood who wanted to escape from it by the road of education. He had become so interested in this work that he had conceived the idea of persuading men from the Universities to follow his example, so that throughout all the working-class quarters of London there might be these ambassadors of culture, living exactly as their neighbors lived, unattached to any church or society,

privately in their own rooms teaching those who wished to learn, spreading in little circles the saving gospel of knowledge. He had never been so grateful for his culture as during these past months of slum tutorship.

When they had greeted he left her for a moment to get the tea, saying that he had grown to dislike the idea of ringing a bell. When he returned with the tray, Mrs. Sterling could not help smiling, so serious and concentrated was the expression of his face.

"I am improving," he said, putting down the tray. "Although the milk is more than usual, I haven't spilled a drop."

While they were at tea she told him that his father missed him dreadfully, and wanted him to come back. She said this without any break in their conversation, and with no particular forcefulness.

"I begin to think," he replied, "that I shall never leave this place. I am striking root."

"That would be a calamity, wouldn't it?"

"No. I do not think it would be a calamity."

"Well, to us it would be a calamity."

"Would it be a calamity," he asked her, "if you knew that I was really finding myself?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Shall I try to tell you?"

"Do. We haven't had a real talk for a long time."

"A real talk!" he said slowly. "Isn't it strange how difficult we find it to talk of the inmost realities?"

"It's only want of practice."

"Yes, and something more. There's no language for the realities."

"Tell me what you can."

He sat back in his chair, with hands in his lap, and began to speak without looking at her, his eyes looking down at his hands: "I came here, as you know, to study things, to observe, to analyze, to reflect. For the last six months I've been doing something else. I've been identifying myself with the oppressed, trying to become one of them. I don't speak any longer of 'the poor.' I call them the oppressed, and I wish to be one of them. I do not mean that they are oppressed by oppression, though some of them are; I mean that they are oppressed by the system of things which exists because no one can alter it from without. I mean, too, that they are oppressed by themselves. They will not look for happiness in the right direction. They are all looking the wrong way. It's quite extraordinary how determined they are in looking the wrong way. If by living among them and becoming one of them I could influence two or three to look in the right way I should be far happier than if I were in the House of Commons voting for measures which will make no difference to anyone, or voting, simply because my party tells me to do so, against measures which might serve humanity."

She said to him, "I think you exaggerate the bad side of politics, but tell me what you mean by the right direction; that sounds as if it might be important."

"Shall I surprise you," he said, "by saying that I am reverting to the principles of some of my ancestors: there were Quakers in the family, weren't there?"

"You are becoming a Quaker?"

"Yes."

"What attracts you to them?"

"You know the stress Langton lays on the apostolic succession in the traditions of the Catholic Church? I see the value of that in the case of loyalty to an institution. It's quite intelligible. What appeals to me in the Quakers is their insistence on the continuity of revelation down all the centuries and on the witness of the inner light. Their apostolic succession is not mechanical: it's the succession of inspired men who have continually appeared to carry humanity forward; and their ritual is not the mechanical ritual of the altar, but the communion of the individual spirit with God in the silence of self-surrender. Langton's loyalty is to an institution, the Quaker's loyalty is to a Person. And I am certain of this, yes I am really quite certain now, that this Person, Jesus the Christ, reveals the will of God."

She began to feel a new emotion stirring in her heart. She could not tell what it meant. She only knew that, looking at her son and loving him with a mother's indestructible sense of possession, she was conscious of enmity for some power which came between her heart and her son's life. She found it hard to repress her feelings. If she had spoken it would

perhaps have been to say bitter words of these Quakers. But before she could speak he looked up at her and said:

"Suppose that it is the truth: *Jesus revealed the will of God*. It's tremendous, isn't it?"

She felt her will paralyzed by his gaze.

"If it's true," he went on, "think what it means. It's the way out. But think what it means merely to believe that Jesus meant what he said. That's revelation enough. But to believe that he actually did reveal the will of God—what can we say of that? It's beyond words."

"Do you believe that?"

He replied after a moment, "Yes, with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my soul." Then he said, "That is what has happened to me."

"But, Christopher," she said, leaning towards him, "you don't mean that you accept his teaching *literally?*"

"That's it. That's the revelation. I do."

"But it means anarchy."

"No; this is anarchy."

"Isn't that unfair? Isn't it unfair to call a more or less unsatisfactory stage of evolution by the name of anarchy?"

"I begin to think that the term evolution is more full of misguidance than any other word in the language. No; I don't believe in that kind of evolution. We are not getting better; we are not producing a higher type of creature; we are avoiding hardness and producing

feebleness. I don't call the present conditions a stage in evolution. I call them an indictment of materialism. They represent man's effort to serve the two masters of human destiny. Our condition is one of chaos and anarchy. You can't have order in this world without the one essential principle of unity—man's will surrendered to the will of his Creator. Anarchy is everywhere. The human race is going in the wrong direction."

She felt all her hopes dying in her breast and, looking on the son whom she loved above all other creatures on the earth she began to know what this new emotion meant which was now stirring in her heart with a greater insistence.

"I'm not at all sure," she said, very slowly, "whether Jesus has not ruined more fine minds than any one who ever lived."

"But how few have obeyed him!"

"It is impossible to obey him. That is why you have churches. It is possible to obey a church: impossible to obey Jesus. Look what he has done! Take the case of Tolstoy. A great artist ruined by the absurd effort to obey the impossible. Consider what would have been the world's loss if Shakespeare had bartered his sanity for a hair shirt and a girdle. Don't you see, Christopher, that an idealist like Jesus is only safe when his anarchy is brought into form by an institution? Don't, I beg you, ruin your life. Don't add another wasted mind to the population of monasteries

and sects. See it steadily. The world couldn't go on if people tried to obey the teaching of Jesus. There'd be no effort. We should all become passivists. We should be waiting for God to act. Science would cease to strive. Everything would go rushing back. The advance of civilization would become a rout and a disaster. The world knows this, and doesn't dream of obeying Jesus. Why should you ruin your life by attempting it? What will be the good? Think of fifty years hence. What do you hope to accomplish? Will you be satisfied fifty years hence or will you be full of remorse? Will you be blessing the name of Jesus or cursing it? Don't let him lead you away. Don't trust him. Don't ruin all your splendid prospects in the world for a will-o'-the-wisp."

Christopher repeated her words, "Don't let him lead you away. Don't trust him." Then he said to her, "It sounds as if you feared him."

She said, "I do. I fear him. And if he ruins your life I think I shall hate him."

"If I said to you, I will give up this life and return to your world, living like all the other lucky ones, enjoying myself, getting all the pleasure I can out of existence—if I said *that* you would be pleased?"

"Yes."

"But if I say to you, I will stay here and help the most helpless and love the most loveless, you would be disappointed?"

"Because it can lead to nothing."

"And you would hate Jesus?"

"Yes, I think I should hate him."

"Then you do not think he revealed the will of God?"

"Christopher, do you really believe that *literally* he reveals the will of God? Think what that means. He was a man, and he lived at a very ignorant period of history, and his teaching was addressed almost entirely to simple people. Is it possible to suppose that every word he uttered was inspired by the absolute truth of the universe, or that the entire human race was supposed to take its orders from him for all time? You can't think that. His general ideas were very beautiful, and they do perhaps approximate to the ultimate truth of things. But you can't take every word he uttered as a revelation, and proceed to act upon it as a divine command. You cannot take him at the foot of the ladder. You must allow for his upbringing, the language in which he spoke, the condition of society at that time, and the ignorance or the craft of those who repeated his sayings. You can only take his teaching as a pictorial effort to express an ideal. To believe in God is a great thing, and to love mankind is a great thing: this is what he asked us to do, and this is what we can all attempt to do without stultifying our minds and ruining our lives. Don't you see what I mean?"

When she asked this question she put out her hand and touched his arm, looking at him with supplication in her eyes. It seemed to her that she was witnessing

his ruin, seeing him, as it were, drowning in the midst of the sea, watching him destroy himself. All his genius was to be sacrificed, all his manhood thrown aside, all the loveliness and promise of his life to be sacrificed for the most impossible idea which had ever deluded the human race.

The touch of her hand produced a noticeable change in Christopher. His gravity lost its quality of sternness. He regarded her with a look which was almost beseeching. She could see that he trembled.

Something boyish in his face, reminding her of his childhood, reminding her of days in which he lay sleeping in her arms, seemed now to be appealing to her, asking her not to be unfair.

She withdrew her hand, and sitting back in her chair said to him in a tone of voice which was as matter of fact as she could make it, "I mustn't worry you. I mustn't at any rate take an unfair advantage. Your life is your own. You must do as you will."

Soon after this act of self-repression, which cost her an effort, Mrs. Sterling took her leave.

She found as she went home that her thoughts were charged with bitterness. She was conscious of a real enmity towards Christ. The sight of two Salvationists, smooth, clean, smiling, and perhaps self-satisfied, filled her with scorn. In passing a church she almost spoke aloud her contempt for religion. A clergyman walking with his wife in Oxford Street winced under her glance and said to himself, "That woman is an atheist."

It was dreadful to her, sane and capable as she was, to contemplate the sacrifice of Christopher's intellect to this absurd delusion. What a ruin it was, a ruin of the finest promise! He might have been anything. He might have taken a part in shaping the evolution of the human race. He might have left a name for the world which would have been like a beacon. And instead of this, he had become a monk of the back streets.

She saw Christ as a tempter of men, as one who stood in the way luring youth from its appointed road and leading it into the wilderness of disillusion, leaving them there with only one last hope for their consummation—the hope that in another state of being the faithful soul would find its reward.

How many lives had this Christ destroyed? How many men who might have been great discoverers or divine poets or heroic statesmen had followed this deceiver into his inhuman wilderness of self-destruction there to lose the very likeness of men? What a disaster to mankind this Christian religion had been, interrupting the real business of life, with its bloody wars, its monstrous persecutions, its desolating discussions of dogma! So long as the churches set up a mystery Christ in the place of the anarchist Jesus, she had been content merely to smile; so long as those who attempted to follow Jesus were the uneducated and the unimportant, she had been only mildly interested; but now that her son was being destroyed by this

same Jesus before her very eyes, she was full of a strong anger against him.

She said to her husband, "I'm afraid we must make up our minds that Christopher will stay where he is for some years."

"But that is ruin," exclaimed Mr. Sterling. "For some years! Why, it is almost too late as it is, and you speak of more years. What on earth is he doing there?"

"Chasing rainbows."

"Where does he get it from?—not from me, not from you. I am a most prosaic man of business. You are the most sensible woman alive. Where on earth does he get it from?"

She was on the point of saying that Christopher would tell him he got this madness from God, but she checked herself, and replied, "From books."

CHAPTER VII

JANE FOYLE

"THERE is no nation like ours," said Mr. Pommer. "We have given back their country to the Boers. Do you think the Germans would have done that? No! We are a great people; the Germans are a little people."

"He's quite the Englishman now, isn't he?" demanded Mrs. Pommer.

"I was English by instinct when I was born," said her husband. "And now I have the papers."

"All the good people belong to one nation," Christopher said with a smile. "It is unreasonable to divide men and women up according to the flag under which they happen to be born."

"From a child," said Pommer, "I hated the Prussians. I could get on well enough with the Saxons and Wurtemburgers; but the Prussian, I hated him like the devil. When they made me a conscript I said to myself, 'This is enough'; and I tell you it was not six months after my military service that I came to England. What a change for me! Here I was a free man. Here I could work and get on. Here there was

no danger that my sons would be stolen from me. My sons are Englishmen. They will do what they like. They will never quail before an arrogant officer or a brutal sergeant. Ha! this is a good country for honest men."

At this point there entered the shop a slight and pretty girl, very demurely dressed, who approached the counter rather nervously, as though she was conscious of interrupting conversation.

Pommer moved towards her anxious for business; Christopher turned to look at her, interested in her appearance; Mrs. Pommer remained at her desk, instinct telling her that this was not a customer.

"Would you be so good," asked the girl, in a low, musical voice, "to tell me the way to Amicable Alley?"

Pommer's eyebrows went up to his forehead. He looked at Christopher, who was about to speak. "Here is a gentleman," said Pommer, "who knows all the little streets better than I do. Amicable Alley, where is that?"

"I know it very well," Christopher said to the girl; "indeed, I am now going there myself."

"Perhaps you would kindly show me?"

"I think we may be going to the same place."

Her eyes brightened. "Are you a Friend?"

"Yes."

Very charmingly she put out her hand, smiling up at him, blushing a little as he took her hand and looked at her with undisguised interest.

She was like a child, with her large eyes full of wonder, her soft skin, and her gentle lips which seemed as if they could never become firm and hard. What made her engaging to Christopher was a sense of extraordinary innocence, or a perfectly unblemished purity, which came from her like the perfume of a child's spirit. Nothing in her little face suggested knowingness. In her manner there was no vestige of self-assurance. And yet, with all her childlike innocence and all her gentle pliancy, there was something in this girl which he felt to be profound, inexhaustibly profound, something which was now seriousness and might one day become grandeur. He was conscious of reverence before her.

When they had gone out of the shop Mrs. Pommer said to her husband, "I believe he'll marry that young lady. Did you see how he stared at her? What a romance if he does. And it began in our shop."

"It would be good for him," said Pommer, "to be married. But how can he marry, seeing he has no money, and does no work?"

"He must have a little or he couldn't live."

"That is his ruin, he has a little, and so he does not work. My children shall have nothing until they are earning for themselves—not one penny."

Christopher discovered that this girl was, like himself, a convert to the Society of Friends. She was the daughter of a doctor in Streatham, and had found her own way into the Society, much against the wishes of

her parents. She still lived with them, and suffered a little at the hands of her brothers and sisters, who regarded her as a prig. But she had been so happy ever since she became a Friend, some years ago, that she did not complain of this lack of sympathy at home.

She told Christopher that she had been asked to join the Friends' mission in Amicable Alley, and that this was her first visit. She was rather afraid. She was not at all sure she possessed the qualifications for working among the poor. She had never been in the slums. She had first joined the Friends in Croydon where an old shoolfellow of hers lived, and where everybody was more or less well-off. However, she wanted very much to work among the poor and so she was determined to do her very best at the mission in Amicable Alley.

"How extraordinary, wasn't it," she exclaimed in her demure way, "that you should have been in that shop?"

"Well, I sometimes think that there is more direction in life than we realize."

"Oh, I believe that too! When one looks back, and sees how a chance acquaintance or an accidental journey affects one's whole life—tell me, do you come down often to the mission?"

"I live close by."

"What! do you live here?"

"Yes, in the slums."

"Then you are one of the officials, I suppose?"

"No; I'm one of the latest recruits, quite a humble person."

"But you aren't one of the poor people?"

"Yes, one of them."

She was puzzled, and after a moment asked if he was in business there. When he told her that he did a little teaching among his neighbors she began to think that he was a schoolmaster, and that superior education accounted for his good manners and the very pleasant tones of his voice.

After the meeting he volunteered to show her the quickest way to the railway station, and walking there he told her his name and asked her to tell him hers. She replied that her name was Jane Foyle. He inquired how often she would come to the mission. She said that she hoped to come twice a week.

"Perhaps you will like it so well that you will want to live here," he said, glancing down at her.

"I am afraid my parents would object."

"I do not think much good can be done visiting these oppressed people from outside."

"I don't quite understand."

"I think one can only be of real service when one is a person's friend, an intimate friend; and friendship is impossible between unequals."

"I should love," she said impulsively, "to give up everything and live among these people. That is what I want to do—to give up my whole life to the service."

"Then surely you will do it."

"But how can I do it, if my people object?"

"You mean that you do not care to pain them?"

"That, and other things. How should I live, for instance?"

"I see."

"But I should love to do it. I should love nothing better."

"Then you may be sure that you will do it."

Christopher saw a great deal of Jane Foyle. After her first week at the mission she would come to the Borough early in the morning, and he would take her about with him into the houses of his friends. He knew people of every religion and of no religion. He was acquainted with a great number of parents who had mentally deficient children, his work among these children making him intimate in their houses. He had none of Jane's quick tact and little of her infallible intuition, but people loved him because they felt him to be sincere. He was accepted by nearly everybody as one of themselves, and nobody ever expected him to give them money.

One day when their friendship had ripened, Christopher suggested that Jane should take him home to meet her parents. She seemed a little alarmed at this proposal, but an invitation was arranged a few days afterwards. This visit began badly. Mrs. Foyle was huffy. She had taken elaborate pains with her raiment, not to please this unknown visitor from the slums but to overawe him. Jane's sisters were aggres-

sively slangy, and aggressively worldly. Their conversation was aimed at Christopher, whom they took to be a common person, disastrous to the family's reputation in Streatham. They spoke as if the world, the flesh, and the devil were three excellent institutions, and as if only vulgar people would dream of calling them in question.

After tea, which was served with a wanton display of silver, Mrs. Foyle, a stout, puffy-faced, and much powdered person, began to put Christopher through his paces. She had round eyes, full of insolence and unrest, with a prim mouth and a chin which was like a down pillow in a child's perambulator.

"I don't quite understand," she said, "your connection with this mission in—what is the place?"

"The Borough."

"Yes, the Borough. Are you one of the missionaries?"

"No; one of the congregation."

"My daughter tells me you live in Walworth."

"Yes."

"Why do you do that?"

"It isn't a bad place to live in."

"You can't be serious."

"But I am."

"I should have thought a man of your education would have wanted to live where you would meet educated people."

"You see, I want to better myself."

"That's precisely what I mean."

"And I find that Walworth betters me."

"What on earth do you mean? My daughter's description of the streets and the people is appalling—perfectly appalling."

"I assure you that Walworth is full of the most heroic people in the world. Their courage surpasses anything on the battle-field. The women are extraordinarily brave. It is quite a mistake to regard people of that kind as barbarous."

One of the sisters began to play a song from a popular comic opera, and another sister to sing this song, which necessitated action. The singer wore a jaunty hat very much on one side of her head, and it was ridiculous to see how this big hat shook and slipped about, as she lifted her arms to click her fingers together on either side of her head, swinging from the hips as she did so.

Christopher was about to take his leave when Dr. Foyle returned from his rounds. If Mrs. Foyle had been huffy, the doctor was downright rude. He regarded Christopher with a frank annoyance, addressed no word to him, and showed by his manner to Jane that he thoroughly disapproved of her action in bringing her humbug and crankiness into the family circle. He was a little pot-bellied man, with fish-like eyes, a big curtain of red moustache, and a partially bald head which was as white as paper—in striking contrast to the florid complexion of his face.

To hear this little person speak you might have thought him the ultimate authority on every question of intellect. He was a born dogmatist. He had all the confidence of materialistic science with all the intolerance of institutional religion. People who did not agree with him were rogues or fools—one or the other.

He was so rude to Christopher, taking him for a common person from a common part of London, that Christopher was amazed, never before in his life having come against such an arrogant form of rudeness. The doctor had his suspicions that this common person was intruding to get his daughter's affection, and he was resolute to stop such a monstrous disaster at the outset.

When Christopher rose to go, the doctor said to him, "I should like to have a word with you," and led the way from the room.

Christopher shook hands with the rest of the family, and followed the doctor.

Everything in this house grated upon his nerves. The drawing-room was vulgar enough with its pretentiousness, but the hall, crowded with what the dealers call massive furniture and hung with the heads of deer, filled him with disgust.

The doctor stood waiting for him in the consulting-room, a small apartment in which green plush furniture held its own against a very ugly roller-top desk of fumed oak. The mantelpiece was crowded with brass ornaments.

"I don't understand," said the doctor, standing on the hearth-rug, his thumbs in the openings of his waistcoat, "what this mission of yours is attempting to do. Is it something in the nature of the Salvation Army, or what is it?"

"To begin with, it isn't my mission," said Christopher. "I'm only one who attends its services and helps a little in its work. But its object is to give people the light of religion."

"May I ask what you are?"

"I am what you see me, a young Englishman: nothing more."

"Do your parents live in Walworth?"

"No."

"What is your father?"

"He is in business."

"And you do nothing, I understand?"

"I teach a little."

"But you have no regular employment?"

"No."

"I should imagine that your father, if he is a business man, cannot be altogether satisfied with your position. However, that is no affair of mine. What I wish to say to you is this: we are thoroughly out of sympathy with this fad of my daughter's. We regard it as ridiculous. We have no objection to Quakers, but we don't want Quakerism, and particularly missionary Quakerism, introduced into our home. I think you ought to know this. I don't expect you to dissuade

my daughter from going on with what she calls her work, but I shall be obliged if you will let it be known at the mission we do not want any of its members coming here. That's all I've got to say."

Christopher smiled. "You make it difficult for me to say what I intended to say to you in a few weeks' time, if you had been kind enough to ask me to come again."

The doctor stared at him.

"I was going to ask your consent," Christopher went on, "to my engagement with your daughter."

"That is out of the question."

"I am sorry."

"So long as my daughter lives under my roof, that consent will never be given."

"Again, I am sorry."

"And let me say this, I regard it as intolerable that a man in your position should presume to think of marriage."

"Might I explain that I have enough to provide for a wife, that is to say in a humble manner?"

"Then you had better look for a wife among those who are used to living in a humble manner."

"But does one look for a wife after he has found the woman he loves?"

"Have you spoken to my daughter?"

"No."

"I am glad to hear it."

"But I have the right to speak to her."

"Let me tell you that I am astounded at your audacity. It seems to me that you are something of an adventurer. But I warn you of this: not one penny does my daughter get from me, and never again shall she enter my house, if she marries against my will."

"You are quite mistaken in supposing that I am seeking your daughter's fortune."

"I hope I am."

"On the contrary, if she accepted me as her husband it would be to share my life of poverty, and to break every connection which held her to a life of comfort. She would have to become one of those whom you call the poor."

"You are a fanatic, then?"

"Well, that is something better than an adventurer."

The doctor studied Christopher with more interest.

"A fanatic is a dangerous person," he said slowly. "It might be safer to marry one's daughter to a rogue."

"But what is your definition of a fanatic?" asked Christopher.

"An extremist, one who lacks balance, one who is without the normal restraints of intelligent people."

"It used to mean," said Christopher, "one filled with divine enthusiasm. The very word enthusiast signifies one filled with the spirit of God."

"Are you going to preach to me?"

In asking this question the doctor permitted himself to smile.

"I should like to ask you a question," said Chris-

topher. He drew a step nearer, and proceeded, "If a man for whom you had prescribed disregarded your prescription or only followed that part of it which he found convenient, would you say he was a sensible person?"

"That depends on the prescription." He laughed, turning about for a moment, and then, coming back to Christopher, smiling. "I see what you are at. You're speaking of the prescription of Christ. Mr. Sterling, I should as soon think of swallowing poison as taking that prescription whole."

"Then, of course, you can understand neither your daughter's position nor mine."

"Perhaps not."

"And yet as a rational man you will agree that your daughter is more honest and more sensible than those who protest their belief in this physician and do not do what he tells them to do."

"What does he tell them to do?"

"To give up their darkness that they may be filled with his light."

"I see."

"Does that sound very absurd to you?"

"I have heard it before."

"But you think it foolish?"

"Not altogether foolish. But quite mad if acted upon to the stultification of reason and will. I have thought these things out, Mr. Sterling. I have also been a student of what is called lunacy. If you will

allow me, I will prescribe for you. Get rid of your darkness by all means; that is to say, open your mind to invisible influences which none of us yet understand: use silence, and meditation, and prayer as much as you like: but exercise your reason and exert your will. Personality is something not to be played with. It can be drugged, blurred, blotted out. You cannot safely commit it to the governance of a disputable hypothesis. But nothing I can say will alter your resolution. You have passed that stage. You are now in the crisis of your disease. All I can do is to counsel you to keep the fever down. Use your reason."

He put out his hand, not unkindly, and looked at Christopher with a certain compassionate interest.

"Will you allow me," said Christopher, "to say two things? I won't keep you. I will be very brief. One is that I regard Jesus with the admiration of my whole intellect, convinced of his wisdom and his reasonableness, not feeling towards him any of those emotions which are characteristic of sentimental worship. The other thing I wish to say is more difficult. It is this. You refuse to consent to my engagement to your daughter; may I say that I feel I have a right to approach her without that consent?"

"You are honest, even if you do not practice the self-sacrifice enjoined upon you by your Master."

"Dr. Foyle, you know that your daughter cannot be happy in this house; why do you want to keep her in it? Like me she has given up the world. Why don't

you let her go? She will never look back. Her heart is crying out for the life of devotion. Believe me, her heart is breaking for it. Surely you will let her follow her Master. What wretchedness for her if you stand between her and the fulfilment of her most sacred desires."

The doctor was about to make answer when the door opened and Mrs. Foyle entered the room. She seemed surprised to find Christopher still there.

"Mr. Sterling," said the doctor, putting out his hand once more, "I have nothing to add on that head to what I said before. I wish you good-bye."

He then turned to his wife. "Yes?" he inquired, demanding why she had come to him.

Christopher bowed to Mrs. Foyle as he passed, and went out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTOPHER PROPOSES

ONE very beautiful morning in July Christopher suggested to Jane that they should take a holiday.

"I haven't seen the country," he said, "for over three years. I'm hungering for a sight of it. It will do us both good."

He took her to a station in Surrey, some five miles from King's Standing, and climbing the hills they walked in that direction. Christopher had provided himself with a small luncheon basket from Pommer's shop and they proposed to eat this meal on the hills before returning to the station.

She saw new things in him as they breasted the hill. He was as quiet and restrained as ever, but deep down in his heart was a fervency of happiness which showed in his smile and in the tones of his voice. He confessed to her that the country was his greatest temptation, told her how he loved it, said that he felt it restored to him all the innocencies of childhood, quoted to her lines from Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold which had always haunted him, and ended by the cry of, "If it were only possible!"

They picked flowers as they went, often stood still to look at the panorama of beauty stretched out before them, took off their hats to let the sun and the air get at their faces, exclaimed again and again at the wonder and loveliness which they shared together all alone.

Then he began to speak about her life. He loved this little spirit with a depth of feeling which sometimes surprised him by its passion. She was exquisitely dear to him, precious beyond any living thing, so sweet was her nature, so tender her heart, and so beautiful her ways. Her spirit animated her body. The prettiness of her eyes, the smile of her gentle lips, the soft tones of her voice, came from this spirit, making her graciousness a living thing.

There was nothing in her face which came there from an ancestor who had truly lived and deeply loved, as he had felt must be the case with Violet Fanning. Her eyes were not the eyes of the dead, but the eyes of a living soul. Behind all her physical beauty, matching it at every point, was her spiritual beauty. Her voice was the voice of her mind, every tone of it sounding from the thoughts which made that mind so fine and beautiful in his eyes. He loved her body and soul, with no duality in his own mind because her body was the expression of her soul. There was nothing he wished away in her soul, and nothing he wished away in her body. She was the child of innocence, and beauty, and truth of whom he had dreamed in his nonage, the wonderful and harmonious girl of his hun-

gering worship. In her he found everything for which the solitude of his heart had prayed.

The unhappiness of her life troubled him, and he was determined that it should end. He could not bear to think of her in that home which had no sympathy with her finest longings, that home which was so pompous, and false, and second-rate, so self-satisfied in its suburban worldliness. She must be rescued. She must be given the life of her desires.

"You could be as happy here as in Walworth?" he asked her.

"I was just thinking how I should like to have a cottage where I could take in children from the Borough and Walworth."

"But would you be happier still in Walworth or the Borough?"

"Oh, yes; I should soon cry out for the dark streets, the back courts, and the brave people."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Yes; that is the place where I would always be."

"Would you choose that life even if it meant poverty?"

"But I love poverty. Anything else makes me ashamed. You love poverty, don't you? You don't want to be rich?"

"No; I don't want to be rich."

They walked for some time in silence. Then he said: "Will you let me ask you to share my life? I want to share yours. I love you, Jane. Let us share life together."

She felt for his hand as it swung between them and held it in hers, saying to him, "I love you so."

They did not stop. He raised his face to the sky, smiling, and said, "God be blessed for this happiness." Then, turning to her, and bending down towards her, he said very softly, "Little Jane, dear little Jane, you have filled my heart with the richest happiness."

"I knew that you loved me long ago," she responded; "but I feared that you might fight against it as a temptation."

"God made me too human for solitude," he answered. "I have wanted you long before I loved you. I have wanted you from my schooldays. I have always wanted you, little Jane."

He stopped and bent down his head to her upraised face. "I am so glad I have found you," he breathed. "It's like finding one's way after being lost for a long while." And then he kissed her, holding her face in his hands.

When they came to that part of the hills from which they looked down upon his home, he suggested to her that they should rest and eat their meal. They had been speaking of their plans for the future, and had decided that they should be married at once, whether or not Jane's parents gave their consent. This was settled before they sat down, and now over their meal they were like happy children.

Presently she said to him, "Perhaps I could earn money, too, by teaching, or even by needlework."

"But there'll be no need," he replied, patting her hand. "Don't you know that I'm a very rich man?"

"No," she said, smiling; "I didn't know that."

"Guess how rich I am?"

"Eighty pounds a year?"

"More than that."

"A hundred?"

"You're getting warmer."

"A hundred and ten?"

"Go on."

"But you're beginning to frighten me. I like to think of you as poor. You aren't really rich, are you?"

"Yes, as things go in Walworth. Let me see: we shall have about three pounds a week. That's a lot of money, isn't it?"

She thought for a moment, and then said: "We can give away what we don't spend. Let's agree never to have a shilling over at the end of each week. Don't you think that would be splendid? Then we should still be poor. We shouldn't feel ashamed. But is your three pounds a week certain? Is there no need for us to save?"

"No; none. It's as safe as the Bank of England."

"Then you don't need to teach?"

"No; I only teach to help boys who want to go to the university. I charge Pommer something because it does him good to pay; and what he gives me I give away. I don't charge any of the others. They come to me and I love to read with them. At first I thought

I would do nothing else but this, and at one time I thought of getting other Varsity men to come down and live among the oppressed, as honorary tutors. Why shouldn't we give our learning as well as our money? I shall still do this if you will let me. But there are other things to do as well. Since I joined the Society I have found out what those other things are. Still, we'll go on with our tutoring."

"Were you at a university?"

"Yes; I went to Oxford."

"Sometimes I think you have had a most romantic past. You aren't a prince in disguise, are you? Tell me about your past. Tell me everything."

He took her hand, and after kissing it held it and stroked it as he spoke to her. "My father is a man of business: my mother is a splendid woman, strong and capable: I have three brothers and a sister. My brothers are all doing what my parents expected them to do. I am like you at least in this that I have disappointed my parents. I have broken away."

"Suppose they should beg you to go back?"

"I have made my choice."

"But they might implore you."

"I shall never go back."

"You frighten me. I do not like your account of your family. I believe they are rich people. I should be so frightened if they came and took you away. I should be so unhappy amongst rich people. Do they live in London?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts?"

"In Portman Square."

"That sounds as though it belongs to the world of fashion."

"You are afraid! Don't be afraid. I shall never go back, and I was content with Walworth before you came; think what it has been to me since, and what it is going to become now."

She said to him, "We will always live with the oppressed, side by side with them, won't we?—always, always."

"I could not be happy, even with you, anywhere else."

"That makes me happy. Oh, that makes me so happy. I will trust you to the end of my days."

When they were going he checked her for a moment and said, "I want you to look at that white house down below in the dark trees."

"I have been looking at it."

"It is a very dear place, with gardens of enchantment round it, and most lovely woods on every side, and in the midst of the woods there is a lake of indescribable beauty — so beautiful in the dawn, and more beautiful still with the moon shining on it. That place is my home. It is called King's Standing. I was born there. I know every rod of it. I came back to-day on purpose to look at it. I wanted you to see it. For that place, if you wished it, would belong to us.

I am the eldest son, and my father wishes me to inherit the property. He is a rich man, Jane, very rich, and a good man too, full of kindness. But if you agree I want to renounce my rights as his eldest son. I want to give up everything to my second brother and to live always with the oppressed as one of them. I had made up my mind to this several months ago, and now my faith is firmly fixed. I must do it. I can't be at rest till it is done. You will agree with me that it is right? You don't want that house and great riches, do you? Neither of us has any talent for the rôle of philanthropist. Our only chance is to give up everything and be one with our neighbors."

She looked at this old home of her lover with no desire in her eyes, but with a feeling of fresh fear in her heart. It seemed to separate him from her. He came to her from another world. She had thought of him in the early days of their acquaintance as one somewhat lower in the social scale than herself, a strangely refined and interesting man, but one who had known poverty all his days. To find out that she was below him in the social scale, to discover that he had made infinite sacrifices for religion, and that for religion he now contemplated so great a renunciation as this surrender of his birthright, filled her with a sense of such inferiority as made her afraid.

"I am going to the oppressed from a home where I was unhappy," she managed to say, clinging to his hand like a child making a confession; "but you have

given up everything, you have made the great renunciation. Am I worthy of your love? Are you quite sure you love me? I am afraid. You have made me afraid."

He raised her hand to his lips, kissing it. "You mustn't think I am making any sacrifice," he said, firmly. "I should hate to be rich. I should be ashamed to be rich. It is to ease my conscience, to escape from unhappiness, that I am doing this. Don't you see that you and I are following one Master, and that therefore our feet must travel together on the same road? It is because our thoughts are the same that we love each other. We are what we are to each other because we are both fanatics."

Then they set off on their walk back; they were full of the deepest happiness, dreaming that nothing ill could befall them.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST APPEAL

CAPTAIN STERLING was so excessively busy at Aldershot, where the new military reforms were in operation, that nothing but the urgency of his mother's summons would have brought him to London.

This summons spoke of a crisis in the affairs of Christopher, and declared that something in the nature of a family council was urgently required to meet the situation.

Langton was on the staff of a particularly keen cavalry general, and he was working night and day with the greatest possible enthusiasm to achieve the perfection of his particular division. The order had gone forth from the War Office, after years of muddling and fiddling, that the British Army was to possess an Expeditionary Force of superlative excellence, every part solidly compacted in the whole, the entire Force ready in a moment to be shot like an arrow to its destination. A thinking department had been set up in Whitehall: the British Army for the first time in its history possessed a Chief of the Staff; keen soldiers, like Langton Sterling, realized with thankful-

ness that the days of decorative militarism were at an end.

Captain Sterling wanted conscription, and in certain moods would condemn statesmen for shunning what he termed the inevitable, always declaring that nothing could be better for democracy than a brisk soldierly training; but when he was challenged to say whether for a conscriptionist Army he would barter the British Expeditionary Force, composed of long service, well-seasoned, and highly disciplined troops, he usually backed down, so intense was his admiration for this professional Army.

To leave his great work at Aldershot, where you could hear the hammering of the rivets, even for a couple of days in town was something of a sacrifice to Captain Sterling.

He got unwillingly into mufti, and drove to the station with his face at the window, watching the soldiers at their work in the camp.

When he reached his home in Portman Square it was to find his two brothers, Arthur and James, in the drawing-room with his mother—Mrs. Sterling looking very careworn and even harried. It struck Langton that this was the first occasion on which he had missed in his mother's appearance a certain trimness which had always seemed to express something of her mental competence.

As he went forward to greet his mother he noticed, too, that Arthur had acquired a look of softness, and

that James had the cut of eccentric people who affe picture galleries and museums. He held himself mo vigorously, as though to rebuke this drawing-roo degeneration of Sterling manhood.

After kissing his mother on both cheeks, he turne and put out his hand to Arthur: "You're getting ve like Corney Grain," he said, with a short smile, t eyelids drawing back a little as he inspected this *b viveur*. "What's your weight, my dear fellow? W don't you join the Territorials?" Then he shook han with James, holding the boy's hand more affectionate and regarding him with less sternness. "How do y like the bank, little Jim? More auriferous than Pa nassus, but not so alluring, eh? That's the word, isn it, *alluring?* Never mind: you are doing your duty

James was indeed doing his duty. None of h brothers was less unfitted for the extremely difficu work of finance, and to few of them could the mecha ical routine of a City existence have been more ir some. But because his mother had pleaded to hi while he was at Balliol, telling him how strongly h father longed to have a son at his side in the ban James had given up the secret hungerings of his hear and, with so cheerful a countenance that he deceiv not only his father but actually his mother, he h announced his desire to become a banker.

When the greetings were over, Mrs. Sterling spo to Langton of the reason which had urged her to c him to town.

"I have had a most extraordinary letter from Christopher," she began; "you shall read it for yourself later on, but I can summarize it for present purposes. It begins by announcing his engagement to be married; the girl, he tells me, is like himself, a convert to Quakerism; she appears to be the daughter of a suburban doctor; and then he goes on to say that he wishes to renounce all his rights as eldest son, having made up his mind to live a life of poverty among the poor."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Arthur, from the ease of a low chair.

Langton was standing by the mantelpiece, erect and stern, the very perfection of physical fitness, his handsome face quick with a soldier-like alertness.

"Have you seen him?" he asked his mother.

"Not since I received his letter."

"Have you answered it?"

"Only to acknowledge it, saying that I must discuss it with him after I have consulted with his father and brothers."

"What does father say?"

"He says that perhaps it is for the best."

"You see," said Arthur, swinging his foot, "father very rightly thinks that it would be a calamity for the property to go to an eccentric who would probably give it to the Salvation Army the next minute."

Langton was thinking hard. He was the heir, if Christopher's intention was carried out. He would carry on Sterling traditions. The family should not

degenerate. He would see to it that *noblesse oblige* meant something real to future generations of the family. All the same, what a frightful catastrophe, what a disastrous calamity, this fad of the brilliant Christopher.

He looked for a long time at his mother, sitting careworn and unhappy on the sofa close beside him; then his gaze went to Arthur, but rested there only a moment; and then to James, who was sitting on an upright chair by a table, his right hand lifting and letting fall the cover of a book, his eyes fixed upon the fireplace.

"It seems to me," Langton said, "that we ought to summon Christopher here."

"What for?" demanded Arthur.

"I fear it would be no use, Langton," said Mrs. Sterling with a sigh. "I am sure his mind is resolute on the subject."

"It's madness," said Langton, with decision. "It's the idea of a madman. I always feared that Christopher would come a cropper over religious realism. His mind was ruined at school. They made him a logician. He doesn't know what religious *feeling* is: all he knows is the logic of the text. He's one of those fellows who would subvert the whole social order by making out that our Lord was a socialist. What a crash, for a fine mind." He turned to his mother, "And what a disappointment for you."

"Yes, he has disappointed me."

She made this admission in a low voice, with her eyes lowered, and only James realized perhaps how much was contained in it. The boy got up presently, walked over to Langton, said something about Christopher, and then sitting down beside his mother on the sofa slipped his arm through hers.

"I still think," said Langton, "that Christopher ought to be here. We ought to see him. We ought to repudiate his suggestion to his face; we ought to make it perfectly clear that in our opinion the step he contemplates is a grave dereliction of duty. He is the eldest son. He cannot shift his responsibilities. It's perfectly monstrous that he should think about it."

Mrs. Sterling, taking James's hand, said that nothing could come of such a conference. "Christopher," she went on, "has told me that he wishes to break absolutely with his former connections. He has begged me never to ask him here. He tells me in this letter that he does not want any of us to come to his marriage. His mind is quite made up. He desires not merely to live among the poor but at all points to identify himself with them. He says he is quite sure that it is impossible for him to give his affections in their completeness to these people, as he wishes to do, if he makes any attempt to live what he describes as a double life."

"He's quite mad," cut in Langton.

"Of course he is," laughed Arthur; "mad as a hatter."

"I don't think one ought quite to say that," said Mrs. Sterling.

"But, my dear mother," Langton expostulated, "to give up his future, to break with his family, and to live in a slum, merely because he misunderstands a few texts in the Bible—isn't this the act of a madman?"

"Don't you think," said James, going red, smiling awkwardly, and stammering a little, "that it's rather unfair to say he *misunderstands* his Bible? I mean, I don't agree with him for a moment, but I think we ought to say that he understands the New Testament in a way we don't understand it, and that whether he is right or we are right no one can say."

Then followed a lively dispute, Langton holding forth with great eloquence on the value of a catholic tradition to correct all these aberrations of the religious conscience, Arthur getting a word in edgeways to express the convenience of commonsense agnosticism, and Mrs. Sterling speaking every now and then a word in defence of Christopher.

In the evening the family council deliberated once again, this time with the help of old Anthony Sterling. It was finally decided that Mrs. Sterling should pay a visit to Christopher on the following day, and that in the meantime Langton should prepare himself to assume the responsibilities of eldest son.

"All I would ask of you," said old Anthony, "and I know I have only to ask it to rely upon its being carried out, is this, that you should all hold yourselves

in readiness to provide for dear Christopher when I am gone, in the event of his coming to himself." Then, with a sudden jerk of the head, the face blanching, and the lips twitching for a moment, he added, "I have already removed Christopher's name from my will in case of accidents."

The next moment, liveliness itself, the old gentleman was rallying Langton on being the eldest son.

"You must get married," he said, pleasantly; "and don't, I beg you, go hunting about in the suburbs for the daughters of physicians. Elizabeth, we must give some parties."

"I assure you, sir," said Langton, "I'm far too busy just now to think of marriage."

"Stuff and nonsense, my dear fellow!"

"No, sir; it's not. You have no idea how hard the Army is working just now."

"But suppose the Church ordered you to get married?"

"Ah, that would be a different matter!"

"Would you take any lady the Bishop chose for you?"

"No, sir, I'm hanged if I would."

On the following day Mrs. Sterling went down to Walworth.

Christopher was reading with a young compositor, who worked at night in the office of a newspaper, a Quaker of nineteen, very pale, goggle-eyed, and long-haired, who was consumed with a desire for learning.

"I'm interrupting you, Christopher," said Mr Sterling.

"We were just finished. I am glad you have com Let me introduce you to my friend Tom Hurrell."

When Tom Hurrell had departed Christopher sai to his mother, standing by her side on the hearth "You haven't come, I hope, to dissuade me?"

"That would be quite hopeless, Christophe wouldn't it?"

He stood looking at her for some moments in silenc "It would distress me to remember," he said at las "that my mother wanted me to turn back."

"You are quite sure, let me at least ask this, tha what you purpose to do is wise, or rather that it inevitable?"

He replied affirmatively, by movements of his hea still regarding her very intently, almost with sorrov

"It is a great renunciation, Christopher."

The word renunciation seemed to awaken him. H started at it. He held himself a little less loosel There came a quicker intelligence into his eyes.

"I beg you not to think of it in that way," he sai earnestly. "I must have expressed myself very badl if you think for a moment that what I purpose to d what I have done, is in the nature of a sacrifice. would be a sacrifice if I gave up this life and returne to the other. That would be an act of renunciatior it would be the renunciation of my soul and of m Master."

He raised his hands and touched her arms very gently, just holding them, a smile showing slowly in his face: "It must seem odd to you, mother, but truly I love this life. I love it more than I have ever loved anything. There's no renunciation. I'm simply embracing the life which enables me to live most fully. I'm quite happy. All the same, don't think I'm ungrateful for the past. I could no more forget your love than I could hate those beautiful days. They were very beautiful days, and you were their good angel."

Once more as she regarded him, gray-faced, stooping, sorrowful-looking, and so grave, there came back the memory of his brilliant boyhood and the memory of her dreams for his future. Once more, too, there came back to her a feeling of antagonism towards Christ, a feeling of great bitterness and indignation, making her face hard as she looked up at her son whom this dreamer had ruined.

"When did I cease to be your good angel?" she asked.

He whitened a little and seemed to flinch.

"Tell me that?" she asked, with the tone of a command.

"Imperceptibly the spirit finds its way to the light," he made answer, letting his hands sink slowly to his side.

In a moment her hands were at his arms, and all the mother in her soul surged into her face, which she pressed close to his. "Christopher," she cried, "don't

you see that I'm your good angel now? Look at me. What would I not do for you? Can you think of anything I would not do to save you an hour's pain? You know I'd gladly kill myself. And Christ—this Christ your thoughts have created—this Christ who never existed—this dream figure of an age which the modern intellect has finished with once and for all—Christopher, Christopher, what can he do for you?"

He did not strive to draw back from her, but continued quietly to gaze into her eager eyes, which were filling with passion, as though he would soothe her spirit with quietness. This calm on his part seemed to intensify her feelings, and she addressed him with even greater passion:

"If you were starving, would he bring you bread? If you were in pain, would he heal you? Ask, ask; he has told you to ask. You know he will *not* give: you know you will *not* receive. It isn't true, Christopher. Try him. Put him to a test. Ask for some hungry person in these streets to be filled, some incurable to be healed, some evil person to be made virtuous. Try him for six weeks. Pray every day, pray night and day, and judge him by the result. Don't you see you're following a delusion? You yourself have created this Christ by thinking of him. There is no Christ. There never has been. You are sacrificing your life to a phantom. Think what life is—how short, how inexorable. If you could hope to achieve anything by this action I would not resist you. But nothing will

come of it, Christopher. Nothing—nothing will come of it. It will be just the same with everything when you come to die. Every idealist thinks he will achieve a revolution. He achieves nothing. What did Francis of Assisi accomplish? What is his influence on our world? What do men of science care about him, and inventors, or statesmen—what do they care? He has made no difference. You will make no difference. Don't you see, Christopher, you're under the spell of an illusion? Your Christ isn't real. He's no more real than Apollo. He's one of the many slain gods of the past; he's only that. You think he's real, that he lives, that he hears, that he acts. So does the Indian think of his gods. All believers think their gods are real. But all the gods that men have worshipped are false. We are ruled by law—only by law, there's nothing else in the universe that we can understand except law. Why do you fall out of the ranks just when humanity is beginning to march? Why will you desert your fellow-men? Why will you go back to the deserted altar? Wake, Christopher, wake! I'm trying to wake you from a dream. I want you. You belong to me. Break these snares, make your way out of the dream; come back to me, come back to the real world."

All the time she had been speaking, straining towards him, holding him with firm hands, he had remained looking into her eyes with the same sorrowful regard, as though filled with compassion for her. But when she said "You belong to me," and when with

a sudden access of such passion as he had never seen before she cried out to him, "Come back to me, come back to the real world," he went very white and began to rock on his feet.

She held him firmly, and speaking in her softest tones, a smile in her wet eyes and on her lips, said to him: "If you'll only see that it's all a case of self-deception, self-suggestion—if you'll only see that, my son! Ah, Christopher, it needs but one swift and remorseless assertion of your reason to destroy this delusion—*make it, make it, make it now.* It's a lie, my son, a lie. That's all it is. A lie from the past. A lie that destroys the reason. Look truth in the face. She's much fairer than this lie: she's beautiful, she's noble, she's faithful—look her fearlessly in the face: say to yourself, I'll be a man! Christopher, wake from your dream. Wake, my darling boy."

Every line in her face appealed to him: all the age that had gathered there and all the fading away of her girlhood meant to him something inexpressibly sacred which searched his heart for pity. She had given her life for her children. The world had set none of those lines in her face. Every mark there had been the work of her devotion and self-sacrifice. This woman's face uplifted to him, beautified by reason of its love, was the face of his mother, at whose breast he had fed, in whose arms he had lain, and round whose neck he had flung his arms to weep away his childish griefs. It was dreadful to him, shocking his

whole nature, to contemplate this face, which was sacred to him, and to feel that her spirit could not understand him.

"Mother," he said to her, very gently, his voice trembling, and his eyes filling with sudden tears, "you have asked me to put my Master to a test. I want to tell you. I have done that. I have asked. I have received. I asked for light, and light has come. I asked for peace, and peace has been given. I asked for love, and love is mine, deeper than the sea, higher than the stars. It is no lie. It is no delusion. These things are known to those who desire Him above everything else. Believe me, this is true. I ask you very earnestly to believe me."

She despaired, as she listened to him.

It was hers now to study his face, and to listen in place of speaking. She was surprised by the tone of authority in his voice, and by some expression in his face which seemed new to her. The gravity of the boy had long ago deepened into a man's seriousness, but in this seriousness there was now a new spirit, a spirit which seemed to her of extraordinary strength and of some abiding serenity. She said to herself, "He is inflexible"; and then she added, "It is too late."

Christopher told her that as for looking to revolutionize the world he had no such thought; and that as for the failure of St. Francis, that wonderful spirit was at this present day supporting thousands of men and women in their conflict with the world, the flesh,

and the devil; and that as for thinking Christ to be a delusion, he knew him now to be the one reality of a world distracted by shadows.

"I would," he said, in conclusion, "that I might be the means of giving to you, so that no sorrow could overwhelm you, the peace that he gives to all those who love him."

At this he stopped suddenly, as though interrupted by a new thought, and then, with something that was nearly energy and almost passion, he exclaimed to her, "Do you know what I mean when I speak about loving him? I mean obedience. It's only when we love him to the point of obeying him that our love can be called love; and when that full love comes, wisdom pours into the heart which we have emptied of our distracted and divided self, his wisdom, the wisdom of God. No one can pronounce judgment upon Christ who has not obeyed him."

"Each one thinks that only he truly obeys!"

"Obedience can be measured by action."

"And you will renounce the world for his sake?"

"But gladly."

"And give up your birthright?"

"Yes."

"And leave your father and mother, brothers and sisters, for his sake?"

"Yes."

"And here live and here die?"

"As God wills."

"Are you happy?"

"More happy than I can tell you."

"More happy than I can understand?"

He wavered.

"How far am I from the kingdom of heaven?" she asked him.

"Ah, mother," he replied, "how can I answer that? I think all are far who do not love. You have loved your own unselfishly: great has been your love for us. But to understand Christ we must love the least of God's children as our very own, and Christ himself to the utmost reach of obedience. Obedience is the only faith. Obedience is the only love. We must obey before we can understand."

"Christopher, this is our farewell."

"No; we shall meet many times."

"But you will not come to us, and you will not want me to come to you."

"I want you to come to me, but not for a little time. I want you to come when I have convinced you that I have made my choice and that there is no shadow of turning in my mind."

"Am I not to see your wife?"

"Yes, I want you to see her."

"When may I do that?"

"We will go now. I know where she is."

"You are sure, Christopher, that she will take care of you?"

He smiled. "I am only sure that we love each other."

That night when Mrs. Sterling returned to Portman Square, she announced that Christopher's decision was irrevocable, and that his future wife was just as mad as himself. She tried to laugh as she gave to the assembled family the narrative of her visit, making it seem that her inquiry had only confirmed a former conviction to which she had become accustomed. But in her own room she told herself that Christopher was ruined, that their lives were sundered for evermore, and that she hated religion as she had never hitherto hated anything.

PART II

THAT WHICH CAME AFTER

CHAPTER I

MR. STERLING'S POINT OF VIEW

CHRISTOPHER and his wife lived on the top floor of a tenement house. This little home of theirs, with which they were humorously well pleased, consisted of two rooms and a few cupboards. Each room was provided with a single window, each window presenting a very conspicuously similar view of roofs, chimneys, church towers, telegraph wires, and smoke. One room was a kitchen-parlor, and the other room was the sleeping apartment, a room just big enough to take two beds, a single washstand, and a very small chest of drawers. Fortunately there was a diminutive hall to this dwelling and here Christopher hung up his clothes, using it in many respects as a dressing-room.

The kitchen-parlor was the single workshop of this united couple. On one side of the little range was a cupboard in which Jane kept her pots and pans: on the other, a set of shelves on which Christopher kept his

books. The window-sill was shared between them as a garden. There were two or three mezzotints on the walls. A little table stood under the central gas-bracket covered with a green cloth. There were two easy-chairs near the hearth, and three straight-backed chairs against the wall. The window curtains were of green linen.

When they first set up housekeeping in this little flat, Jane employed a woman to do the weekly washing, not because she could not do this work herself, but because she found it a great fatigue and some little risk to carry the basket down to the asphalt yard, where the children of the tenement played with dust-bins, and there hang up and leave her linen to dry. But after some months of this experience with a char-woman, she determined to do what the rest of her neighbors did, namely, to tie a string across the kitchen-parlor, and on this string to hang her washing. It was a great sacrifice of the amenities, but she had her reward. On the day when she first made this experiment Christopher was out, being busy that morning with his work among mentally-deficient children, and Jane intended to take the washing down, wet or dry, before he returned. But Christopher came home unexpectedly early, and entering the kitchen and seeing the washing strung across the little room, uttered a cry of pleasure, going eagerly to his wife, and kissing her. "You could have done nothing to please me better," he said, with warm pleasure; "now we shall be exactly

like our neighbors, and you will see the difference this touch of the commonplace will make in our relations with them."

It was quite true. Christopher knew the nature of his neighbors with a wonderful accuracy. So long as Jane employed somebody to do her washing, and sent the washing down to the yard, the neighbors were conscious of a difference in Mr. and Mrs. Sterling; but now when they entered for a chat, and found washing hanging familiarly in the room, they behaved with a complete naturalness and treated both Christopher and his wife as their equals.

Christopher continued his tutoring, and very often would be reading Greek or Latin authors with a mechanic, or teaching the principles of political economy to an ambitious boy just leaving school, while Jane was either cooking at the fire or sitting with her needlework at the open window. They both continued their attendance at the Friends' Mission, where Christopher would sometimes preach, but they no longer regarded it as the main concernment of their lives. They felt that they could best express their devoted obedience to the teaching of Jesus by living simple lives among simple people, identifying themselves in every way with the lives of those people, sharing their troubles and their pleasures, going intimately among them as friends and neighbors, witnessing always by the spirit which was in them to their love of their Master.

It was never contemplated by Christopher that his

way of living would revolutionize society. He never regarded himself in the light of a reformer. Indeed so great was his modesty that he never once entertained the notion that he should write articles, much less a book, either on social problems or on religion. He seemed to understand from the first that his life was meant to move obscurely among the shadows. He was happy in the shadows. He shrank with real spiritual repugnance from the idea of publicity in any form. He believed that no lasting good was likely to come from philanthropic organizations, and he held that mechanism was most dangerous to the religious spirit. If he cherished one minor ambition it was that perhaps some day he might persuade men from the universities to live among the oppressed as he was doing, living intimately with them, and sharing with them the culture they had acquired at public schools and the universities.

But his major ambition was the hope of influencing all those with whom he came in contact with the social and individual spirit of the Christian religion. He was fond of quoting passages from one of Edward Caird's Balliol addresses, and would make this particular address the foundation of nearly all his religious discussions. He held that profoundest truth lay in those words, "For it is not by special acts directed to the welfare of others that we benefit them most, but by the tone and direction of our habitual activities." It was the tone and direction of his habitual activities that

he consecrated to the service of his fellow men. He declared to all those who spoke to him intimately that the inwardness of a man is his only means of touching the soul of another, and that in Caird's words, "We cannot keep the secret nobleness or meanness of our hearts to ourselves; silently and without our being conscious of it, the virtue or the vice goes out of us to weaken or to strengthen our neighbors, and the virtue or the vice comes out of them to weaken or to strengthen us." He would often say when somebody reported to him a dreadful thing which had happened or told him of some noble action in the world, "You remember what Caird tells us: the whole weight of the evil that is in our society is dragging us down, and the whole force of the good that is in it is helping us up."

There was another phrase of Caird's often on his lips—"He who shuts others out, shuts himself in"—and it was his realization of the deep spiritual truth in these words which made him urge all his humble friends to live frankly and freely with their fellow men. He never once counseled anyone of his acquaintance to become a minister of religion, but no one ever talked to him of spiritual matters without being bidden to share lavishly with the rest of mankind whatever gifts he had received from the common Father. Sterling himself was always going in and out of homes, not to preach and not to exhort, but to give himself to them in ordinary commerce of friendship.

He was not a considerable reader of newspapers, but he followed public questions with great interest, and discussed them with his neighbors. The Irish Question made a deep impression on him in the summer of 1914, and he was filled with indignation against Sir Edward Carson for calling the people of Ulster to arms. He would speak about this matter with profound feeling, never allowing his indignation to become violent, but showing with a decision sometimes wanting from his rather dispassionate discussion of other public questions, that here was a thing which he deemed of enormous importance.

He had hated with a righteous hate the violence of the suffragette women, but he spoke of their actions with pain rather than with indignation, horrified that women should burn down churches and homes, bewildered that they should actually glory in these wicked crimes. But the action of Sir Edward Carson touched him much more deeply. His indignation at that arming of the north proceeded from a sharp recoil of his whole nature from the use made by the Ulster men of the name of God. He denounced such blasphemy with great firmness. He went so far on one occasion as to declare that Sir Edward Carson had opened the door to anarchy, and that henceforth revolution was provided with an excuse for taking up arms to gain its ends.

"All violence," he declared, "is of Satan. It is opposed to the will of God. Every blow struck at a

human creature is a denial of Christ's revelation."

Among his friends and neighbors were men of all shades of political thought, but because Christopher was recognized on every hand as a good man and a sincere man discussions in which he took part were never of a bitter or quarrelsome character.

Throughout the neighborhood in which he lived he was always spoken of as "Mr. Setrling." It is curious that one who so completely identified himself with these people, none of whom knew him to be the son of a rich man, should never have been treated with anything approaching to familiarity. In his presence men were respectful, and behind his back were enthusiastic. They loved him in their own fashion, a deeper fashion than is often to be found among other sets of people; they would have done anything to serve him, made any sacrifice to please him. He was always receiving little presents which testified to their regard. A cobbler who kept three hens in a back-yard would bring him a couple of new-laid eggs; a charwoman whose brother lived in the country would bring him half a pound of fresh butter; Tom Hurrell, the compositor, would bring him valuable books picked up at second-hand stalls; and a widow, who supported a large family by selling flowers outside Liverpool Street station, rising at dawn to go to Covent Garden market, would very often climb the five flights of stone stairs to leave a nosegay at his door.

It is important to understand that Mr. Sterling's

religion was of a rational rather than of an emotional character. He never at any time gave way to sentiment. Everything in his mental life was thought out, with a logical severity. It was his quarrel with churches that they were not intellectually thorough. He attributed the ills of society to a lack of logical honesty. Never was a man so ruled by reason as this humble disciple of Christ who endeavored to do exactly what his Master had commanded.

He said to Tom Hurrell on one occasion: "By far the most important political event in history is the life of Jesus. It has been obscured by two forces, Catholicism and Protestantism. The first stage in the evolution of this religion was Catholicism, which attempted to attain unity at the cost of individualism. The second stage was Protestantism, which flung unity aside in its passion for individualism. After Armageddon, which is likely to come in our own lifetime, the third stage will be begun, and the historian will speak of it as Socialism. In Socialism men will perceive at last the fulness of Christ's teaching, namely, that while the individual in the inwardness of his self must hold separate communion with God, he must in his social life be entirely and lovingly devoted to the welfare of his fellow men. This devotion to the welfare of all will be the great unity of life in which all individuals will find their completeness. Then, in those days, men will look back on that which went before and see how blindly their fathers followed Christ, and how vainly

the Church made use of his name. It will seem to them like a nightmare that in any age calling itself Christian nations should have warred against nations, that there should have been competition and strife, the trampling down of the weak, the triumph and reward of the selfish, bitterness and contention between classes and parties, immense luxury and immense misery. For Christ taught us to seek our happiness in the welfare of others, told us we must love our enemies, bade us put all pride and selfishness out of our hearts, instructed us to be humble, merciful, and loving. Socialism is obedience to the teaching of Christ. Any other form of government is disobedience."

It was because he believed every word of Christ that he cherished with an earnestness which no one could question the faith that only in Christ and through Christ could the world escape from the chaos and anarchy of individualism into the highest conception of Socialism.

CHAPTER II

THE TRUMPETS OF WAR

WHEN towards the end of July 1914 it seemed almost certain that war would break out in Europe, Mr. Sterling was so deeply distressed that he seemed like a man stricken with physical pain. No smiles in those days ever came to his lips. He would groan as he read the newspapers, and in his sleep he would cry out in a loud voice, grinding his teeth and muttering the name of Christ. He used to say to his wife, "If this thing comes upon us, it will be the world's denial of God, a denial sealed with the blood of the world's youth."

He returned to his usual serenity and also to his customary logic when the horror became inevitable. England's declaration of war did not so greatly distress him as Belgium's determination to dispute the violence of Germany. It was the decision of Belgium which seemed to strike wild grief out of his soul and to restore his reason to its absolute control of his mind.

"Now we shall see Armageddon," he said to his wife. "This is the culmination of the world's disobedience. It is inevitable. The nations have taken

the sword and with the sword they shall perish. One can see now how certain was this calamity. What else has been the policy of the nations of the world except the policy of self-interest? Each has striven for its own welfare, each has struggled for dominion, each has armed itself to fight for its possessions. You know how the drunkard says to himself, 'I can defy the laws of nature'; you see him hale and strong; laughing derisively at those who warn him; living bravely with his hearty companions who fear no ill; and then one day disease creeps up close behind him, raises its dagger, and strikes him down, leaving him in ruin and in pain. So it is with nations. They say to themselves, 'We can worship Mammon, we can seek plunder, we can boast of our power, we can lay up treasure for ourselves here upon earth, we can hate our enemies, we can oppress the weak, we can deceive and outwit the strong; all these things we can do and no harm will befall us.' And while their church bells are ringing, and while their fleets and armies are watching, and while their statesmen are lying and duping, suddenly in their midst appears the avenger of God demanding the penalty of disobedience."

She spoke of Germany as the sole cause of this calamity.

"I know there is a godless Germany," he replied, "and on the head of that godless Germany may be the blood of this war which will certainly overwhelm the world; but there is another Germany, virtuous and

kindly, peaceful and studious, modest and tender. Do you not see that if the other nations had chosen to obey Christ and had put themselves into brotherly sympathy with this good Germany, seeking not their own individual aggrandisement, but the spiritual welfare of all peoples, do you not see that then the bad Germany could not have been master in that house? Our disobedience to Christ has been the opportunity of that bad Germany. It has said, 'Those who speak of religion are hypocrites: they do not mean what they say, they do not practice what they preach, they are contemptible in their falsity.' It has preached its own gospel of Power, and no one has been able to contradict it, for it is the gospel of all the other nations though they pretend to another. I know that the bad Germany is the enemy of God; but I know also that among the other nations there is none which can truly call itself the friend of God. All history has recorded man's disobedience to Christ; his disloyalty to the divinity within his own breast. Germany may be more guilty than the others, that is for God to judge, but none is innocent."

These views of Mr. Sterling gave no particular offense to those who heard them expressed at the beginning of hostilities. The first opposition they encountered was from Tom Hurrell, a fellow Quaker, who was immensely excited by Belgium's heroic action in standing up to Germany. Not all his instinctive hatred of war, not all his long-inherited Quakerism,

could prevent this compositor from uttering the most enthusiastic praise of Belgium and her hero-king.

"It's like David and Goliath," he exclaimed. "It's epic. It's Homeric. It's sublime. I'd give anything to be a Belgian. Think what it means. Belgium might have gone scot free if she had stood aside. Instead of that she's standing up—standing up to the greatest military machine in the world."

"Consider the result," said Mr. Sterling.

"Oh, she'll be knocked down and trampled on and kicked out of shape: that's a certainty. But you don't mean to say, Mr. Sterling, that you don't admire her for standing up to the invader?"

"Consider the result if she went to her frontiers, men and women and children, the whole nation, without arms of any kind."

"I see what you mean."

"Consider the result if she confronted the armed legions of Germany with her domestic life and her faith in God. Do you think German soldiers would fire on her? Do you think the German legions would knock her down, trample on her, and seize her territory?"

"Ah, but you're speaking of the ideal!"

"No, of obedience to Christ. They who take the sword shall perish with the sword. We are to love our enemies, not to hate them."

"But, Mr. Sterling, Belgium has given her word to defend her territory from invasion."

"And we have given our word to defend it if it is violated."

"Well?"

"Do you suppose we shall do it?"

"I don't know. Perhaps we shan't. I heard today that John Morley, and Burns, and Simon, and two or three more are against it."

"Do you want England to fight?"

"If war has got to come, I think she ought to keep her word."

"But when did the people of England, when did the people of Belgium, agree that they would give their sons to the slaughter? That agreement belongs to diplomacy. It belongs to secret and wicked statesmanship, a statesmanship which is inspired by hatred and jealousy, which denies the revelation of Christ, which is founded on deceit, and which aims at Power."

Tom Hurrell was not convinced.

"I have been reading the newspapers a good deal during the last day or two," said Mr. Sterling. "In none of them have I discovered the smallest recognition of Christ as an authoritative guide. Instead I find angry words, words full of bitterness and denunciation, words calculated to intensify the passion of Germany. No one thinks of appealing to the good people in Germany. No one strives to be a peacemaker. The whole spirit of the nation is expressed in a wild fury of hatred which vainly endeavors to appear as the language of moral indignation. What is the

purpose of all this violent language? It is to whip up the baser passions of the people. It is to rush our statesmen into war. It is to secure the destruction of Germany. Is this how Christ would have acted?"

Two days later came the news that Britain had decided to fight at the side of France, Russia, and Belgium.

Mr. Sterling bowed his head. "It is Armageddon," he told his wife, "and we who love our Master can only pray that the end may come soon."

Late on the following day he was approaching his home when a taxi-cab drew up at the door, and Langton in khaki got out, and hurried into the building. The cab waited at the door.

Mr. Sterling walked more slowly, dreading to see his soldier brother, not that he had ceased to care for him, but that he could not think what he should say to him.

As he climbed the stairs he comforted himself with the reflection that as the cab was waiting the visit was not likely to be long.

He found Langton standing by the open window in the kitchen, with Jane at his side. The sun was shining into the window, and a slight breeze was stirring the curtains. At his entrance Langton swung quickly round and came to him half-way across the room. He looked extraordinarily fit, giving out a sense of quick strength and great mental alertness.

"I've come to say good-bye, Christopher; just a

word, for I've no end of visits to pay." His voice was full of energy and suppressed eagerness, but there was a tone of kindness and affection in it which moved Christopher a good deal.

Christopher held out his hand, looking at him affectionately, his mind strangely crowded with memories of his boyhood.

"I am more sorry than I can tell you," he said slowly, "that you are going."

"Don't be sorry, my dear fellow," replied Langton; "it's going to be a big business, a matter of life and death, but I wouldn't be out of it for the world."

Christopher saw in him an incarnation of the warrior spirit, and could not restrain a feeling of admiration for all that is great in that spirit. Langton was the very perfect British officer—tall, slim, vigorously knit, keen featured, and almost electrically alert. There was no Prussian rigidity about him, and no swaggering elegancies. He was an admirable specimen of the clean-living, sport-loving, and modest-minded gentleman, a man made for honor and duty, who would never descend to baseness, never hold truck with vileness, whose word would be kept to the letter, whose friendship would be faithful to death. One always felt in contact with this upright, honorable, and quite fearless man that his soul had the quality of athleticism.

Christopher thought to himself, "He is very good to look upon, this brother of mine, who wears those South

African ribbons on his tunic as though they stood for love and beauty, instead of murder and mutilation. There is something quite splendid in the clean spareness of his body, in the severity of his expression, in the strong carriage of his head, in the feeling of rejoicingness which comes from him."

He said to Langton, "You are quite glad, then, that you are going?"

"Rather; I should think so. We're all keyed up to concert pitch. If the French do their part, and the Russians don't come a cropper, our lot will give a good account of themselves. You never saw such an army. There never has been a finer."

"Will it be a long war, do you think?"

"I hope not. It's impossible to say. According to some people if the Germans don't get what they want in three months they'll be counted out. Finance comes in. But I shouldn't care to prophesy. All I'm ready to swear is that the British Army will give a good account of itself."

"Well, I pray it may be soon over."

"Ah, you disapprove of war."

"Don't you?"

"I believe that the contingency of war is essential to the healthy manhood of a state."

"You were always a keen soldier."

"Physical morality appealed to me from boyhood. I love feeling myself to be fit. I regard physical slackness as a great danger. I've just looked in on Arthur.

I wish you'd see him. He wants pulling out of a hole. He's getting fat, and he's looking morally flabby. London is doing him no good. Get him here and talk to him."

He turned to Jane. "How nice you've got this little place. The flowers in the window are quite jolly. I can fancy Christopher sitting up at night with a great book on the table."

Jane said to him, "We shall both pray for you."

"Ah, I knew I need not ask you to do that. Pray for me every day. And pray for the Allied Armies. We're going to fight the legions of Satan: it's a life and death struggle between the forces of Light and Darkness: I'm sure we shall win in the end, because our victory will be the victory of God; but it's going to be a most bloody business."

When he was shaking hands with Christopher at the door of his cab, he said in an undertone, "I got a wonderful feeling from your little wife: she is very near to the kingdom of heaven: tell her I shall feel happier in my mind for the knowledge that she will remember me in her prayers."

Christopher said to him, "I know one petition she will make in praying for your safety: she will pray that you may fight with as little hate in your heart as is possible."

For a moment Langton was perplexed. Then his face cleared. "Ah, yes," he replied, "one must hate the enemy's cause, but not the individual enemy.

British troops have always been famous for their mercy to a beaten foe. They fight like gentlemen. Good-bye, Christopher; great things will have happened when we meet again: good-luck to you, old man. And don't forget to try to see Arthur. Charity begins at home."

When he had gone Christopher did not return to his flat, but walked slowly forward, his hands in the pockets of his jacket, his eyes on the ground. He was strangely affected by this meeting, profoundly moved by this farewell. If he no longer groaned in anguish over the thought of war's brutal destructiveness, more than ever before did he apprehend with a peculiar sharpness of reality the personal suffering of war. Here was his brother, hale and well, going to the slaughter-house of Europe. Would he ever see that brother again? And if he ever did see him again, would he be just the same? He might be without an arm, without a leg, without eyes, without a face. All over Europe mothers were saying farewell to their sons with the same thought in their hearts. At Christian altars throughout the world mothers and wives were imploring God to protect their sons from murder and from mutilation. The youth of the nations, fair and fresh, with the dew of morning on their lips, the light of dawn in their eyes, the song of hope in their hearts, were going up in their myriads to this slaughter-house, the sacrifice of godlessness, the sacrifice of international covetousness, the sacrifice of anti-Christ.

They in their innocence and purity were to pay the price of the world's sin: their blood was to be spilled, their bodies to be maimed, their souls to be tortured to the very edge of madness, their lives to be dashed upon the stones of death, because their fathers had sinned. He cried out in his soul against the madness of the world. These young men were the world's promise: they were carrying the torch of man's progress: their feet were set upon the threshold of humanity's advancement; and now, in place of a torch, they carried a sword, instead of going towards the light they were herded in dense masses towards the darkness —these young who might have solved the riddles of pain, disease, inequality, and unrest.

He found himself walking in the direction of Pommer's shop, and it occurred to him that he should go and see how this naturalized Briton of German origin comported himself under the scourge of war.

Pommer was in fury, and Mrs. Pommer was in tears. It was from Pommer's lips that Christopher learned the reason for this state of affairs. The baker had never been so eloquent. His eloquence was accompanied, too, by such tremendous energy of feeling as drove him to walk up and down behind the counter, waving his arms, and snorting like a war-horse.

"People speak of the Kaiser!" he exclaimed, with immense contempt. "Here they call him the Kayser—ach, they are very ignorant. They say it is the Kaiser who has willed this war. The Kaiser, always it is the

Kaiser. I will tell you what the Kaiser is. He is—*that!*" Here Mr. Pommer snapped his fingers, and made a rude noise with his lips. "Nothing more, I tell you. He is a fellow with a screw loose somewhere. He has no control. He gets excited. His blood boils up. One moment he is white, then he is scarlet. Come in at one door you find him cold as ice, come in at another and he is blazing. Such a man is nothing. Poof—we dismiss him. He could not do this thing. He is just flapdoodle. Ach, nothing at all. I will tell you who has done it. Yes, I, Pommer, will tell you. It is the Prussian landowner and the Prussian merchant. These men are like tigers. They have no blood in their bodies. They are all claws and teeth. They are the enemies of the human race. They are Germany's enemies. I hate those men. I saw what they were about. I knew this thing would come. I left Germany because of those men. And now see what they have done. Look at my wife! She weeps. Why does she weep? Because my two boys have gone off to be soldiers. That is what those men have done, damn their eyes! My sons, educated, strong, clever, ready to take their place in the world, must take a rifle and go and shoot Germans because these Prussians have said, 'We will have War!' My wife weeps; I do not weep. It is the woman's part to weep. I do not weep. What do I do? I denounce these Prussians. I say they are the enemies of the world. I do not want my sons to kill Germans, but I want them to kill

Prussians. I will give all my sons to kill Prussians, yes, and I myself will go too. I say to my wife, 'It is not for you to weep: you should be proud: you have strong sons, born of you, who will kill Prussians, therefore you should be proud.' Ach, but it will be a long time. God knows when it will end. All this about the Belgians—bah, I do not believe it. Belgium will go down like *that* when the Prussians mean it. Millions of men will be poured through Belgium. France will be black with Prussians. Ach, it will be terrible."

Christopher inquired about the sons, and learned that the two older boys had gone off that very morning to enlist. They were his pupils, and he felt pained that they had not come to consult him before taking this step.

Mrs. Pommer kept muttering between her tears, "To think of my having reared them for this! The trouble I took with them. They've always had the best of everything. And now they must go and fight. I can't believe there's a God to allow such things!"

Nothing that Christopher had to say succeeded in softening the anger of Mr. Pommer against the Prussians or of comforting the considerable distress of poor Mrs. Pommer. He took his leave of them in a despondent frame of mind, and walked home as wretched as he had come.

CHAPTER III

HELPING THE ENEMY

"I SHOULD like to know," said old Anthony Sterling, examining the end of a cigar before he cut it, "what Christopher feels about this war." He looked over his glasses in the direction of Mrs. Sterling at the other end of the table, who was knitting with an energy which seemed vindictive.

"He probably thinks," replied Arthur, who had honored his family on this occasion by dining with them, "that we ought to fall upon the Kaiser's neck and kiss him with an effusion of righteousness." He lifted his coffee-cup, and finished the contents.

Old Mr. Sterling, accepting a light from James with a little bow of thanks and a little quick smile of affection, playfully winked the eye which Arthur could not see, as if to say to James confidentially that of course the future Lord Chancellor would tell them all there was to know on this subject.

Arthur continued: "It would be rather fun to get old Christopher here and roast his fanaticism over this conflagration. I should like to examine him on the true Christian's attitude towards war." He turned to

his mother. "Why not ask him to come to dinner?"

"Then when you have got through Christopher," said Mr. Sterling, the cigar beginning to glow; "it would be rather fun for us if old Christopher had a go at you; wouldn't it?"

"I should be delighted," said Arthur, laughing good-humoredly.

At this moment, as if Providence had arranged the matter, who should walk into the room but Christopher himself.

He looked as gray as his own clothes, and his face was so marked by exhaustion that Arthur thought of him as unwashed. He was lined and haggard, with his hair untidy, his eyes heavy, the gray flannel collar round his neck crumpled, the black tie disarranged, his clothes old and dusty.

Everybody except Arthur expressed pleasure at seeing him, rising to their feet, uttering words of glad welcome, and hastening to meet him. Arthur rose, napkin in hand, and approached his brother slowly, critically, smoking a cigarette.

"You look worn out," said his mother; "I will ring and order you some dinner."

Christopher stopped her, saying that he could very easily satisfy his wants from the dessert on the table; and, then, turning to his father, explained with a smile, as if to warn him not to be too warm in his welcome, that he had come to beg. His greeting of James was full of the frankest affection, his eyes lighting up as

he shook hands and studied the handsome face of this favorite brother.

When they were seated at the table, his father said, "We were speaking of you only a moment ago; weren't we, Arthur?"

Christopher, who was peeling an apple, glanced up at Arthur with a smile, and said in his quiet voice, "You look more like a Roman emperor than ever."

"That's the law," said Arthur, disposed to be pleasant.

"Assisted," said his father, "by French sauces and old port: don't you think so?"

"We were saying," laughed Arthur, who was always ready to welcome any joke against himself which tended to confirm his reputation as a gourmet, "that it would be interesting to hear your views on the moral question of this war."

"Ah, my dear fellow," replied Christopher, "I'm far too busy to occupy my brain with abstract questions of that nature." He turned to his father. "I'm working like a galley-slave, and I've come to ask you to help us. It's work that will appeal to you, I'm sure. Jane and I are the sleuth hounds of Stephen Hobhouse. You remember him, don't you? He has started an Emergency Committee for looking after the families of Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians whose bread-winners have either gone back to their countries or are locked up here in our internment camps. The amount of misery is already prodigious. It's enough

to break one's heart. If a man never hated war before this would make him hate it for the rest of his days."

Mr. Sterling said, "I have always hated war."

"It's the true Quaker blood in you," said Christopher, smiling his approval.

"I was quite certain," Arthur remarked, "that the work you spoke of when you first came in would be work on the enemy's side."

"What do you mean by that?"

Arthur smiled indulgently. "My dear Christopher," he replied, "most men in England are now considering what they can do for their country; therefore, I argued, you would be working hard for the other side. I'm not criticizing you. I'm sure that this work is admirable. And God forbid that any words of mine should diminish by a single guinea the amount of loot you hope to bear away from the family coffer——"

"That is his name for me," interpolated Mr. Sterling.

"But you will agree," continued Arthur, "that it is unusual work, work different from any other form of national enterprise, and not exactly the work which is likely to give us the victory."

"Ah!" cried Christopher, smiling so happily that he looked five years younger, "you are still the unblushing critic of mankind, still the talker of enormous nonsense." With a sidelong glance at James, he asked, "How on earth do you manage to put up with him?"

"I don't," said James; "if he lived here, I should emigrate."

"Oh, in occasional small doses he must be quite stimulating," Christopher admitted. Then to Arthur he said, "I won't be drawn by you into a controversy. I've only got a few minutes, which must be devoted exclusively to what you describe as the extraction of loot. But try to get this into your dear old head: a man is not helping the enemy who endeavors to preserve his country's good name for justice and liberalism. My voice will not be missed from the chorus of those who cry 'Hun!' My hand, however, would be missed by the little company of those who are helping to mitigate the distresses of war."

"One moment," said Arthur. "My point was——"

His father cut him short. "Let Christopher first tell us something about this work and its needs. I have a very great regard for Stephen Hobhouse. He's a noble fellow. Christopher, you have caught the Speaker's eye."

Mrs. Sterling sat at the end of the table industriously knitting, her head bent, her eyes on her work. Ever since that unusual outburst of feeling, when she made her final appeal to Christopher she had experienced a strange sense of awkwardness in meeting him. Her visits to the tenement had been few. His occasional visits to Portman Square, if she was alone when he came, always distressed her. She had accepted the inevitable, and to a degree which surprised herself had outgrown the passionate love which for a quarter of a century she had cherished in her heart above all

other affections or ambitions. That love had been deflected by Christopher's choice of life, perhaps too by his choice of wife, towards the youngest of her sons, and it is certain that at this period of her life the love which she felt for James, if not so great as the earlier love for his brilliant brother, was the greatest affection of her maternity.

She felt on the present occasion as a girl happily and proudly engaged to be married might feel on encountering the man whom she first loved. She was at one and the same time a little ashamed of this first affection and yet nervously anxious that her former lover should not cut a sorry figure in the eyes of other people. She no longer felt that Christopher belonged to her, and yet she could not dispossess herself of the pride which he had once created in her heart and mind —the pride that she was the mother of such a son.

Christopher told his story very well and Mrs. Sterling very soon found herself so interested in his narrative that every other feeling slipped into the region of the unconscious. It was a tale to touch the heart of all people in whom pity still exists—a tale of little families, once very happy and united, suddenly confronted by starvation, ruin, and the bitterest hostility of former neighbors. What made this tale so powerful in its appeal was the tragic fact that many of the women thus reduced at a stroke from joy and happiness to ruin and a state of terror were women of English birth, the children clutching at their skirts for

protection having no other language than English.

Mrs. Sterling stopped knitting, and let her hands lie idle in her lap. She raised her head and looked at Christopher, whose face was turned away from her, for he was speaking to his father at the other end of the table. James sat beside him, watching his face, listening sympathetically to his words. On the other side of the table, Arthur also watched Christopher's face, but with an air of detachment, studying him as a problem in psychology, his own face the express image of self-esteem.

The room was full of shadows, for it was dimly lighted by shaded candles, and in these shadows the face of Christopher, though it had none of the youthful freshness and grace of James, seemed to Mrs. Sterling as she listened to his words full of a great strength and a very wonderful beauty.

She thought to herself, "What a tragedy it is that such a mind should be lost to his country at a time like this."

Mr. Sterling was affected by Christopher's story. His gentle face became visibly soft with the excess of his feelings, the mobile lips twitching once or twice as though he suffered physical pain, while there were occasions when his eyes moistened in sharp sympathy.

"I am glad that you are doing this work," he said, at the end of Christopher's narrative. "I agree with you that it is work of a patriotic nature. Tell me what you would like me to subscribe."

Christopher said that in truth he knew very little of the financial side of the Committee's work; it was only on calling at headquarters that evening after a long day's hunt for these stranded families in the North of London that he had heard a depressing account of the finances, and so had volunteered to come off to his father. All he knew was that the demands of this work far and away exceeded the subscribed supplies.

"Very well," said Mr. Sterling, "your labor shall be rewarded. I'll give you a hundred guineas."

"And I," said Mrs. Sterling "will give you——" she was going to say fifty guineas, but when Christopher turned quickly and looked at her, she said, "another hundred guineas."

"How splendid of you!" exclaimed Christopher. He got up, went to his mother, kissed her on the forehead, fondling her shoulder with the other hand. It was a caress which had been common between them in years gone by. She looked up at him, smiling.

"I agree with your father," she said; "it is a most useful and patriotic work."

Still standing by her chair he challenged Arthur to say what he would subscribe.

"Not a shilling," replied the future Lord Chancellor.

"Well, sixpence, then," said Christopher, much amused by the decisiveness with which his brother sought to dignify his parsimony.

"Not even sixpence," said Arthur; "for I consider

that there are other funds of a less equivocal patriotic nature which have the prior claim. As to these friends of yours, while I am sorry for them, I can't help seeing that their inconveniences are the result of their own conduct. Any English woman who could bring herself to marry such a loathsome beast as a German must expect the hostility of decent people."

"What a sentiment!" exclaimed Christopher. "Why, my dear Arthur," here, after patting his mother's arm very affectionately, he withdrew his other hand from hers and went to his chair at the table, so that he might be opposite to his brother, "it is just such a sentiment as that which has produced this calamity."

"Do you call it a calamity?" demanded Arthur. "I should say that nothing better could have happened for the safety of Engand. Sooner or later we should have had to fight these Huns, for their arrogance was becoming intolerable, and now we have got them very neatly between hammer and anvil. Nothing could be better. With Russia on one side, and France and ourselves on the other, Germany is going to be squeezed till there isn't a drop of conceit or a microbe of danger left in her disgusting carcass."

Christopher turned to James. "Does he often talk like this?" he asked, and not very playfully.

"I suppose my sentiments shock you," said Arthur; "but I assure you they are the sentiments of most of your fellow-countrymen."

"Does it occur to you," asked Christopher, "that there are people in Germany just as moral, just as educated, just as kind, and just as anxious for the peace and happiness of the world as any in England and that these civilized and religious people in Germany have been overborne by just such people in this country as yourself, whose only attitude of mind to the rest of the world is that of pride, jealousy, and hatred? You are one of the war-makers. You are one of the jingoes to be found in every nation. And like these other fire-eaters, these other fomenters of hatred, you are sending other people to do the fighting for you. Why don't you enlist?"

Mr. Sterling laughed in his soft and deprecating way. "But, my dear Christopher, is it to be thought of that Lucullus should doff such vestments as you now behold him wearing (observe the quality of his soft shirt and the texture of his black tie and I wish you could see his shoes and socks under the table) for so hideous and democratic a stuff as khaki?"

Arthur assured his father that if the call ever came for men of his age he would very gladly put on khaki, and go forth to slay as many "swine Germans" as he could get at.

"May I live to see that day," said his father, and rising from his chair, as if to end the controversy, he suggested that they should go upstairs.

Christopher, saying that he had much writing to do

before he went to bed, took leave of the family in the hall, and hurried back to his home.

On the following day, before setting out to the headquarters of the Emergency Committee, he paid a visit to Carl Pommer, thinking to himself that if any one in England should subscribe to this work of charity it was the nationalized baker of Walworth, of whose prosperous circumstances he had a number of evidences.

He found Pommer in a surly mood.

"These English newspapers," he declared in a loud voice, smiting with his clenched fist one which he had been reading when Christopher entered the shop, "ought to be stopped by the Government. They are a disgrace to England. What is the glory of England? —it is her liberalism, her sense of justice, her love of fair-play. And here you have papers which are illiberal, unjust, and tyrannical, selling in millions! What do they say? They speak as if every German was a wild-beast, a monster, a devil out of hell. They do not appeal to the good people in Germany; they do not explain to the socialists in Germany what we are fighting for; they do not tell the English people that the Germans are the victims of the Prussian Government. No; they tell lies, they tell lies! These atrocities in Belgium, they make out that every German applauds them. That is a lie. They know it is a lie. What is the population of Germany? It is fifty per cent. more than the population of England. What does that mean? It means

that there are fifty per cent. more blackguards in Germany than in England. Of course there are blackguards, and of course there are atrocities. In war you always have atrocities. But who is the guilty one? Not the German people. It is the Prussian soldier, the Prussian landowner, the Prussian manufacturer. Why don't these papers say so? Ach, they want to make people here angry. It is their policy. They think that England will not fight properly unless she is in a rage. But what about English justice, honesty, fair-play—what about that, I ask you?"

Christopher could get no more than one pound out of the baker, and he went away more than ever convinced that to stir up hatred is a crime against God and man. He had confidently expected ten pounds.

This work on which he was engaged not only occupied all his time, but absorbed his affections. Its interest was so great, its appeal so poignant, that he never knew till the end of each day how utterly he had exhausted himself. He would often return so entirely fatigued that he could not eat his supper and would go straight to his bed. Not a day passed but he looked into human eyes filled with fear. Fear came to mean in his mind something much more terrible than he had ever imagined it to be. It seemed to him a degradation of the human soul. A woman's eyes full of fear hurt him as though she denied her divinity, as though she asserted kinship with animals. He could not have prosecuted this work but for the restoration of its

mercy. He, the instrument of the Committee, could see the fear die out of those hunted eyes, could see incredible hope returning, could see in the end a blinding gratitude shining there, gratitude which bowed his heart to the dust.

Many a German and Austrian woman said to him in those days, "You call us Friend, we whom everybody else calls either an enemy, or an alien, or words much worse; ah, it is a beautiful word, the word Friend, and that is what God meant all His creatures to be, friends. Why should our neighbors call us enemies? We have done no harm. Did we want this war, this wicked war which has taken our husbands away from us? No; we did not want it. The women never want war."

Some of these women were quite old, and their sons and grandsons had been taken away from them. Many would rest their heads against the wall of a bare room, and refuse to be comforted.

When Christopher returned to his home not too exhausted for conversation, he and Jane would compare notes with each other, her work lying chiefly among children. She would tell him of families of little children, whom she had found starving and terror-stricken in bare rooms and whom she had carried away to the railway station and dispatched to happy homes in the country, seeing happiness and faith return to their eyes.

And these two in their humble room above the chim-

neys and roofs of London, would tell each other, while the fate of the great world rocked on the battlefields of Europe, that there was only one moral principle which would heal humanity of all its wounds: the love principle of the Master whom they worshipped and whom they obeyed.

CHAPTER IV

FAMILY DIFFERENCES

THE war had not advanced many months when James, bareheaded and dressed in tweed trousers and a sweater, was drilling every day in the Green Park, fitting himself for a place in the fighting ranks.

Mrs. Sterling would often go to the park, and, unseen by James, would sit on a chair under the trees, watching him at his work, with such grief in her heart as could not be uttered. She knew now, if she had never known it before, that her youngest was her dearest. Great as her affection still was for Christopher, as she had discovered on that surprise visit of his to Portman Square, it was as nothing in comparison with this overwhelming devotion to his brother which she knew now to be the very center of her life.

James was the adorable son, gentle, almost feminine in his thoughtfulness for others, self-effacing, tender, sympathetic, and delightful—delightful intellectually, delightful in personality. He was not yet thirty, and still retained the freshness of his wholesome youth, with no loss at all in her eyes of the soft beauty of his boyhood. It was a link with the past to have him

still under her roof, to be responsible for him, to see that he was looked after, and his things kept as they should be kept. She could not imagine the breakfast table without him. His coming back from the bank and his entrance into the drawing-room for tea was an event which made her hurry home from the houses of her friends. They went to the theater together. He would read to her from a volume of new poems, discuss with her an article in the reviews, or a book of consequence, and there was no one he more loved to have at his side in visiting exhibitions of pictures or in attending sales.

Mrs. Sterling would sometimes wonder whether James had created a new love in her heart or had grown up to inherit the love which Christopher had left desolate.

Langton had come home from the front as a colonel, and after a few days of tremendous activity had gone back with the promise of a brigade. He had no stories to tell of German atrocities, but he impressed his family very much by his recital of that great epic retreat of the British Armies from Mons. He spoke highly of the Germans' mass discipline, and almost lyrically of the British soldier's individual valor. He told them all that it was going to be a very long war, and that British methods would have to be revolutionized before we could hope for victory.

Mrs. Sterling felt proud of Langton, and saw a virtue in him which hitherto she had perhaps over-

looked. He was now something more than the good soldier: he was part of that impregnable force which held the German avalanche in check. She realized that there was a form of intelligence different from literary intelligence, and that in this intelligence of action her soldier son was a signal figure. He belonged to the brains of the British Army. And yet, proud of him as she was, she felt no such pang at parting from him as had pierced her heart when James announced his intention to enlist.

She had wanted James to wait until she had contrived to get him a commission; but he begged her not to attempt any such thing, declaring that he was quite unfit for so great a responsibility. He said to her, "I neglected my duty in not joining the Territorials when the Government was begging us to do so and the National Service people were crabbing the whole thing. Now I must begin at the bottom. I'm not sorry to do so. I feel I'm nearer to Christopher. He's in the ranks of England's working-classes, and I'm in the ranks of her democratic Army. It's the right place for men like him and me. Arthur, of course, could only join as Field-Marshal, bless his old heart!"

In those days the position of Arthur Sterling was one of historical interest. He occupied a conspicuous place in the army of London Chatterers. No man dined out so regularly or had his diary more crowded with engagements. He was forever being rung up on the telephone by delightful women who implored

him to come to luncheon or to tea. His letters were invitations. At every house he entered he met some one who became a fresh hostess.

His popularity was due almost entirely to his fine Roman face and his authoritative manner of speech. He looked like a man who knew everything, and he spoke as one who was in the confidence of statesmen. The curious thing about his popularity lay in the fact that no one ever doubted his knowledge, although his prophecies of Monday were always being contradicted by the events of Tuesday. A woman might say to another, "Do you think Mr. Sterling really knows?" and instantly she would be told that his father was going every day between the Treasury and the Bank of England; that some one had assured her only yesterday that Mr. Sterling was hand in glove with the Prime Minister, and that everybody in London knew perfectly well that no man outside official circles knew more of the secrets of things than Arthur Sterling.

The truth is that in those days people were willing, eagerly willing, pathetically willing, to listen to anyone who spoke of the war with any degree of authority. And not only this: there were crowds of people hungering and thirsting after gossip. A rumor was never too absurd to be debated as a serious truth in some of the most famous of London drawing-rooms. People in those days, like certain newspapers, lived on sensationalism.

Arthur Sterling had not only seen the Russian sol-

diers who passed through England, but knew their exact number, a State secret which he never disclosed. He could tell you the names of the British Generals who had been sent home, the regiments which had broken, and the number of our soldiers who had been shot for cowardice or treachery. He was well posted, too, in the matter of political affairs, and was always telling people to look out for some sensational change in Downing Street. As for the British Navy, he greatly feared that one day there would be a fearful disclosure, although Royalty itself was interfering to hush matters up. Occasionally, in the midst of his chatter about the conditions of things in France, a woman would suddenly rise from the table and go towards the door with her handkerchief to her eyes or her mouth, and Arthur's hostess would presently explain that she was worrying about her husband or her son in the Army.

It must not be imagined that Arthur Sterling was ponderous in his gossip. On the contrary, he regarded the war with a spirit of quite philosophic detachment, and would joke about it, telling stories and repeating epigrams which made everybody laugh. He never lost his appetite or an hour's sleep during the most critical period of hostilities, and thanks to his good health, his humorous disposition, and his complete selfishness, might have continued in this spirit to the end of the war but for that which happened to him in 1916.

It need not be said that he kept up his theatrical con-

nection, and was always in the van of every society entertainment which sought to provide comforts for our troops and occupation for our photographed women.

The enlistment of James did not greatly trouble Arthur. He so spoke of Langton and James to his friends that their military patriotism reflected some sort of glory on his civilianship. There were a troop of women in London who really believed that Arthur adored his youngest brother and was suffering torture at the thought of the risk he was preparing himself to encounter.

But to Christopher the enlistment of James really did mean something very hard to bear. Mrs. Sterling suffered, but felt that James was perfectly right. Christopher suffered, feeling that James was wrong. He shrank with something akin to horror from the bare idea that James should contemplate the killing of a fellow-creature. His spirit rebelled against an organization of society which should render possible so great a desecration of so noble a soul. James was not meant for the slaughter-house. He was a man marked out by nature for the finest sensibility, for the purest, the most innocent, and the sublimest joys; and he was being taken by the State and trained in the pagan blasphemies of murder.

One night James paid a visit to Christopher, and when Jane had gone to bed, they sat over the fire together discussing the whole matter.

CHAPTER V

TWO MORALITIES

"I GATHERED from the letter you wrote me the day before yesterday," said James, "that you regard my enlistment as something forced upon me. I assure you there's no compulsion whatever. I've been longing to fight ever since Belgium was violated."

"That surprises me," said Christopher.

"Well, I didn't speak of it because I saw no chance of my taking any part in the fighting; but I wanted to go like anything. You see, I'm something of a crusader, something of a knight."

"I see."

"You and I," continued James, "represent what Caird used to tell us at Balliol were the two moralities of the Christian religion."

"The moralities?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand that. Did he mean, there is a duality in the Will of God? I don't understand."

"He used to tell us," said James, "that Christ did not come to destroy the normal life of humanity but to inform it with a new spirit. Men like St. Francis and

St. Bernard and Tolstoy, in denying normal life, in practicing the extremes of self-abnegation and obedience, practiced one of the moralities which have grown out of this religion. But the chivalry of the knight-errant represented another morality of this same religion, and was inspired and strengthened by the extreme devotion of the monk or the nun who denied their human nature for Christ's sake. The knight resists evil, he refuses to parley with the enemies of God, he rides abroad to slay the dragon of sin, his whole life is set upon building the towers of the eternal city."

Christopher, who had been sitting forward in his chair, with his hands resting on its arms, his eyes fixed upon the dwindling glow between the bars of the kitchen range, sat back, stretched out his legs to the fender, and without looking at James replied as follows: "Between these two moralities the world has not got very far upon its road. They seem to me rather like two masters. Surely it is better for men to have one master. Of course one sees what Caird meant. It is obvious that Christ did not come to shut men up in monasteries. He did not visit humanity to destroy human nature. But in presenting a new spirit for human life he laid down one fundamental principle. He laid down the great law of Love. Men are to love God. Without this love for the divine Fatherhood they must be lost in a maze of errors. And they are to love their fellow-men. They cannot love God with-

out loving their brothers, and they cannot truly love their brothers without loving God. Now, what puzzles me is this: how a man who professes to love God can disobey Him, and how a man who professes to love his brother can kill him. Do you remember Tertullian's saying, that Christ disarmed humanity in taking away Peter's sword?"

James found it difficult to reply to this direct charge. He knew the answer he had to give but how could it be given without hurting Christopher very sharply, and without leading to an intimate discussion which he felt would be painful to both of them?

Instead of making this direct answer, then, he said that he regarded the right kind of patriotism as a part of religion, and that if a man loved his country, surely he ought to be willing to die for her, just as a man should be prepared to die for his faith.

"I remember," he said, "a phrase of Caird's which exactly expresses my views on this subject. He used to tell us that a nation lives when its sons are ready to die for it."

"As the Germans are now dying," said Christopher.

"Well, yes: Germany lives by virtue of German self-sacrifice."

"But won't you agree, my dear fellow, that it would have been better for the world if these German soldiers had been willing to die for humanity, and quite unwilling to die for a system of Government?"

"Yes, I see that. But since they are attacking my

country, which I love, I am ready to defend my country against any system of Government which they might impose upon it."

"It is your country you are prepared to fight for?"

"Yes."

"What does your country mean to you?"

"Ah, my dear Christopher, if I could tell you that without making an ass of myself! I've tried to express it in some poems. I must send you a copy when they are published. It is easier to describe love of country in verse than in prose."

"But what does your country mean to you, tell me that? I'm deeply interested."

"I know very well you'd hear me out sympathetically."

"Of course."

"And yet it's so difficult to express these things prosaically. Besides, I feel I might unintentionally hurt your feelings. Your view, I know, is to place humanity above nationalism."

"Never mind about my view."

James flushed a little, smiling self-consciously, shifting uneasily in his chair, and then with a laugh began to speak. "Well, here goes," he said. "I am a youngish man, extremely fond of life, not very certain of any immortality beyond the grave, and rather a coward in the matter of pain, or even of ugly sights: and yet I am soberly willing to die for my country: to put it more strongly and more beautifully, I can say I should

feel it a sort of ecstasy to die for England. Well, I ask myself what is it in England that enables me to transcend nature in this illogical manner? What do I mean when I use the great name of England? I mean England's justice, England's liberty, England's wide tolerance, England's goodness. But the spirit of England is too high a mystery for language. All I can say is that when I try to think what this spirit means to me my brain is stunned and my heart overflows."

His face became grave, his voice sank to a lower key, he spoke with a greater intensity, free of all self-consciousness, as though he were explaining to himself why he was willing to lay down his life for his country: "I think it is best to leave all the big words alone, and to stick to the little words which belong only to us. After all, every nation would say it is fighting for liberty and justice. I am ready to die for English liberty, and English justice, but I mean by those words all sorts of things which belong to England alone. When I use the words English liberty I think of Eton, and Oxford, and Westminster Abbey, and my mother. Then there's Chaucer and Shakespeare and Herrick and Wordsworth and Browning. Then there's Purcell's music, and Arne's and Bishop's. Then there's the English farm, the village green with a cricket match going on, the hedgerows in spring, the woods in autumn, and the hills in all weathers. Then there's the kindness of everybody—the cheeriness of our people, their hospitality, their good-nature, their playfulness.

I think I could die for the essays of Elia, or for Mr. Pickwick, or for old Dobbin. You know what I mean? — everything that's happy and good-humored, and kindly, everything that we understand and feel when we speak of English character or the Englishman. I mean our Englishness. I feel it looking at the pictures of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney. I feel it reading Henry V. and the Merry Wives. I feel it looking at Georgian architecture or the traditional cottages of Sussex and Gloucestershire. I feel it thinking of what our men have done in India and Egypt—a mere handful of them. I feel it when I hear names like Havelock, Livingstone, Lawrence. It's something not to be phrased, not to be defined—only to be felt like a wind. It's like the word Honor, or the word Chivalry. It sounds like a trumpet in my soul. Everything I can conceive of as beautiful and true is expressed for me in the name of England. And because I feel that between the spirit of England and the spirit of Germany there is an antagonism which cannot be reconciled, I am going to fight in the ranks of England; and quite truthfully, with no manner of exaggeration, I can say that to die for England, so that she may still be the England I love, will be for me a sort of ecstasy." He paused for a moment, then added, "I mean every word I have said."

Christopher was deeply moved. He had listened with acute attentiveness, and had allowed the spirit of the words as well as the words themselves to enter

his mind. He knew very well that throughout Europe there were thousands of young men going up to the slaughter-house in this same spirit. He shuddered at the coming massacre of such beautiful youth. A score of times he could have interrupted his brother with challenging questions which would, in his opinion, have scattered James's poetic patriotism to the winds, but he refrained because he was striving to understand this spirit which was impelling myriads of young men to offer their lives for that which he regarded as a phantom.

After James had finished speaking, Christopher got up from his chair and began to walk up and down the little room, very slowly, with his hands in his jacket pockets, his head bent, his eyes following the movements of his feet.

"We all love England in that way," he said quietly; "how can we help ourselves?—she's so lovable. My love for her has increased incredibly since I lived with my present neighbors. You spoke of England's cheeriness; it's a word characteristic of the nation, a very significant and potent word, and never to be understood, I think, until one sees the thing itself in people the logic of whose circumstances is all in the direction of bitterness and despair. There's some stuff in English character splendid beyond the measurement of language; and he who loves England as part of his love for God will be very willing to die in order that English character may live."

"I am so glad to hear you say that."

Christopher was silent for some moments, walking slowly up and down the room, absorbed in thought. Presently raising his head, and looking straight before him, he said:

"You know how Arthur, or any other vulgar person, distresses you when he makes sweeping judgments and wholesale condemnations: you know how your mind rebels, for example, against his shallow abuse of the entire German nation, when he calls them Huns, or swine, or something equally severe? Isn't war rather like that? Isn't war the physical equivalent of such a mental condition? A soldier must kill wholesale. He doesn't discriminate. His indictment is drawn up against a whole nation. A young German banker, inspired by just such a patriotism as yours, will not stop to inquire whether you are a jingo or a pacifist, an atheist or a Christian, but will seek to kill you in the conviction that you intend to pillage his cities, dishonor his women, ruin his country, dismember his empire. So, too, you will seek to slay him. And thus war goes on. It is the inevitable consequence of a spirit antagonistic to Christianity. It is hatred in action."

James agreed, but felt himself being gradually drawn away from the actual into the region of dreams.

"You must not think," said Christopher, with a strange emphasis which immediately fixed James's attention, "that I am playing with words. You mustn't

think either that I have come lightly by my opinions. I know very well how natural your opinions must seem to you, and how very unreal those which I am attempting to state. But let me try to explain why I think these opinions of mine are sounder than yours. Yours have been tried down the centuries. They have been put in practice for thousands of years. They are opinions founded on the principle that the strong survive, that might is right, that force is the ultimate authority. The Germans have acted on this theory, but so have the French, the Russians, and ourselves. The only real difference between us in this respect is that the Germans act upon these opinions with a greater thoroughness. What is the result? It is war: it is the murder and mutilation of myriads of innocent young men, sacrificed to a false theory held by the old, who wait cowering behind the valor and the agonies of the young to know how the result will affect *them.* Isn't that true? Isn't it true that these theories of yours have been tried for centuries? And isn't it true that the result is still—war?"

James agreed again, this time with a certain misgiving in his mind.

"My theory," continued Christopher, "strikes you as unreal only because it has never been tried. But consider how that theory stands. What is its foundation? Its foundation is the moral law. The moral law distinguishes the gentleman from the scoundrel. The moral law says that we are not to be selfish and

covetous, that we are not to struggle and jostle for the feeding trough; but it says something more: it says that we are to regard all men as the children of a single Fatherhood, and that we are to labor for the good of the whole and not for the prosperity of the part. Has this theory ever been tried? On the face of it, isn't it a more reasonable theory than the other?"

He stopped, facing towards James, and for the first time looked at him. "Doesn't it strike you that if Christ was in any sense of the word a messenger from God he must have declared to men ideas which were true ideas, and surely ideas on which all those who recognize his mission should be willing to build their theory of life? Honestly, James, doesn't it strike you as—well, as grotesque and absurd, that men who profess to mould their lives upon the teaching of Christ should flagrantly disobey him in the very foundations of that teaching?"

"Yes, of course it does."

"Think of the world at the present moment. In Germany there are Catholic and Protestant teachers of this revealed religion fomenting national hatred and urging their people to slay the people of England, France, and Russia. And so it is in England, France, Russia. Think of it! Isn't it like a world of madness? Doesn't it make you feel that humanity is irrational? Christ said, Resist not evil, and, Love your enemies. Those are his words. They are not counsels of perfection, any more than the commandment against

murder is a counsel of perfection. They are to be taken literally. They are teachings foundational to everything else he had to say. His whole mission was to declare the supremacy of love. Everything was said when He declared that God is Love. And you have Christians in all the belligerent armies, urged on by priests and ministers, going out every day to kill their brethren of the faith."

James made an effort to defend his logic. "My dear Christopher," he said, "I agree with everything you say. I myself would not fight for an hour to add the whole of Europe to the British Empire. Nothing I think could have persuaded me to fight against the Boers. I hate war. I regard it as irrational and un-Christian. But everything you say strikes me as appropriate only to the conclusion of these present hostilities. The house of life is in flames. When we have got the fire well under, then we may talk about the restoration of that house. But while it burns I must fight the flames."

"But you do not think that war can end war?"

James considered. "Yes, I think I do. I think that this war will end war."

"How can you believe that?"

"When Germany is beaten," replied James, "her democracy will overturn the whole system of Prussianism, and that will give us a new Europe."

"Surely not a new Europe! I mean there will be a struggle for markets, a war of tariffs, international

covetousness, international animosities, and so, more wars. Won't it be the same Europe in all its essentials whatever may be the changes in its forms of government?"

"I suppose there will always be competition."

"My argument is," said Christopher, "that what Europe needs, if humanity is to be saved, if men are to be delivered from the tyranny of the present dispensation, is not a new form of Government, but a new heart, a new spirit. I mean, Europe to be saved must believe that the utterances of Christ are axiomatic of rational existence: that he said what he meant: that he revealed to us the real Will of God. Without this conversion, which alone can give to mankind a transvaluation of values, how can Europe do anything but blunder along the road of hatred and murder and destruction? War can never end war. One power only can pluck out from the heart of man the root-cause of such calamities, and that is the power of Christ."

James had nothing to say to this.

"Do you see what I mean?" asked Christopher. "Until the human will is surrendered to God it is at the disposition of the devil. All is chaos and confusion without a principle. The Prussian has a principle, and acts upon it: hence his power and efficiency. But what is our principle? We say it is not the Prussian's, we say indeed that we are fighting this Prussian principle; but our principle is the same, just the same, only we

are not so entirely convinced as the Prussian that it is the right principle, and so we don't act upon it as thoroughly as he does. What we do not acknowledge as the true principle is the Will of God, and that is the only principle which can overthrow the Prussian. This war is not a struggle between the man Nietzsche and the sane and lucid Christ. Christ never struggles. You can never force him into the lists. Nietzsche fights Nietzsche; madman tears madman; Christ is outside the conflict, waiting for man to turn to him for healing."

Christopher sighed as he said these last words, and regarded his brother very sorrowfully. "What distresses me so much in your enlistment," he said heavily, "is my conviction that God made you for the spearless army of his Christ. You have all the qualities of a disciple. All that is lacking is decision, the will to decide for love. I wish you could make that decision. I wish with all my heart you could make it. Believe me, in the times that are coming, Christ will need every recruit who will take service at his hands. I can feel now, with every day that passes, a greater force, a stronger drive, a more irresistible energy, in the powers of darkness. We are only at the beginning of calamity. These dark powers of the universe are surrounding the homestead of humanity, shutting it out from the light of God's love, covering it with storm, shaking it with tempest, blackening it with the shadow of destruction. Man is alone with the powers of darkness. God has

not turned away His face from the earth, but man has called these powers of darkness about him, and they have blotted out the face of God. We are surrounded by the enemies of our peace. We are threatened by the enemies of God. A destiny more terrible than any man of these times can imagine awaits the human race. This war is only the muttering of the storm. However long it may last still it will be only the muttering of the storm. The storm will break when peace is declared, and it will last till it has destroyed mortality."

He uttered another deep sigh and passed his hands over his head like a man distraught, standing there in front of his brother, with a brightness in his eyes which seemed to James like the glitter of fever.

"Don't you see," he asked, almost pleadingly, "that every man who takes up a sword to fight adds to the power of hatred, and that every man who refuses to fight and who labors in the name and power of Christ to befriend his fellow-creatures helps to save the world —to save the world? Do our newspapers tell you of people in Germany who are working as we are working here to minister to the innocent victims of war? Do you know why they do not tell you of the Quakers in Germany, working with German pastors and German professors and German citizens to comfort and befriend our English people over there? It is because they want to stamp out the last smouldering embers of love left on this perishing earth, and to leave us nothing, nothing but hatred. It is the same with German

newspapers. They exhibit us as monsters, as heartless monsters who would starve women and children into submission, who ill-treat our prisoners, who torture the wounded, who commit a thousand atrocities. What is their object? It is the same as our newspapers! They fear the power of love, and they believe in the power of hate. That is to say, their allegiance is not to God, but to the devil. What can come to such a world? We are sowing hatred with both hands. We are trampling under our feet the little love left in the world. What can be the end? You know that the end cannot be God's will."

As James walked home through the dark streets, he said to himself that everything in this discussion turned upon a question which neither of them had discussed, the providence of God.

"Christopher believes in a God who governs the world," he told himself, "and who would do things for us, if only we would surrender our wills to His. I do not believe in such a God. I believe that we have got to do things for ourselves. God has left the world to our ruling, and the world must be saved from Prussianism if it is to be free. No: Christopher is the saint in his cell, and I am the policeman on the road outside. I am a little less selfish and a little more gentle because of him; but he would be knocked on the head if it were not for me."

So James went out by the same door wherein he went, and Christopher the same.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRAGEDY OF MR. POMMER

EARLY the next morning, while Jane was preparing breakfast in front of the fire, and Christopher was polishing their shoes beside the open window, a note from Mrs. Pommer was delivered at the door asking Christopher to come and see her immediately. "Please come at once," ran the penciled message; "we are in *great* trouble, and I fear for Mr. Pommer's reason."

Christopher would have started off there and then, but Jane insisted that he should first eat his basin of porridge. Both of them concluded that one of the sons had been killed in the war.

But when Christopher arrived in the street where the Pommers lived he saw very quickly what had happened. For the polished windows were invisible behind shutters, and in front of the shutters stood two policemen, facing a small crowd of disreputable-looking people, and of the household windows above the shop there was hardly one with a whole pane of glass.

When Christopher entered the parlor he found Mr. Pommer crumpled up in a chair, his head bowed, and

his hands before his face; the poor fellow was sobbing and groaning like a child. Beside her husband's chair, patting his shoulder and bidding him not to take it so much to heart, stood Mrs. Pommer, pale and tearful. A daughter was clearing away a breakfast which no one seemed to have eaten.

Pommer was in shirt sleeves, and wearing carpet-slippers. His hair was unbrushed, and he looked as though he had slept in his clothes.

At Christopher's entrance his groans increased and his sobs redoubled. He did not remove his hands from his face, and continued rocking himself backwards and forwards from his hips. He was the very picture of ruin and despair.

"It happened last night," said Mrs. Pommer, in a low and weary voice. "For three or four days they had been writing things up in chalk on our shutters, calling us Huns, and all that. And Mr. Pommer had been receiving post-cards and anonymous letters for more than a week, abusing him dreadfully, and using such language as I couldn't repeat to you—oh, horrible language: well, horrible isn't the word, it was filthy. But we never thought it would come to this. Business did drop off, and people were sometimes sarcastic to us in the shop; but we never thought that they would make a raid on the shop. They came last night, about seven o'clock, just before we were closing. You never saw such a crowd in your life. Oh, dreadful looking people out of the slums—women like animals, and men

like devils—*dreadful* people they were. First of all they charged into the shop and began taking what they chose. Mr. Pommer stood up to them, but one of the men struck him in the eye and then in the mouth, knocking him down on the floor and kicking him. I just had time to pull him inside the parlor, or they'd have murdered him. When they'd pretty near cleared the shop they went outside and began throwing stones at the windows, breaking all the glass from the top to the bottom. I thought we should all be killed. You never heard such yelling. It was like a lot of fiends. I said to——"

At this point Pommer suddenly leaped up from his chair.

He looked half tragic and half comic, standing there in shirt-sleeves and carpet-slippers with a wet face, a black eye, and a mouth all swollen and clotted with blood.

Christopher saw only the tragedy of his appearance.

Here was the room, so familiar to him, of Mr. Pommer's domestic pride. The gaudy wall-paper was crowded out by pictures in still gaudier gilt frames—oleographic landscapes, enlarged portraits of Mr. Pommer's father and mother, photographs of the children, and a large colored lithograph of William Gladstone. The mantelpiece was loaded with china ornaments under glass cases. The furniture was of imitation ebony, tortuously carved and covered with a green plush which stuck to tweed trousers very unpleasantly.

There was a piano in the room, and a book-case, and a gilt bird-cage occupied by a restless canary, and a glass aquarium in the window with gold fish swimming dismally in and out of holes in a melancholy piece of concrete which looked like a piece of prehistoric Gruyére cheese.

The bad taste of this room did not trouble Christopher, because it seemed to him a symbol of Pommer's lavish domesticity, which was now menaced by ruin. The contents of the room made in his eyes a tragic background for the tragic figure of the distracted baker, whose laborious life of devotion to his children was now brought to a critical stop, broken across the back, as it were, and lying helpless in the bloody dust through which the wheels of the chariot of war were still ploughing.

Before he could speak, Pommer broke out into a torrent of complaint, waving his arms about, and stamping with his feet on the floor. "My sons are fighting in the British Army!" he cried. "They are fighting the Germans—my sons, my own sons who call me father. I have my papers. I too am British. I became British because I thought Britain was a country of justice, a liberal country, the champion of fair-play. I chose Britain for my country. I married a British woman. My children are British. They are fighting for Britain. And this is what Britain does for me! Ach, it is no longer the old Britain. It is as bad as Germany. What would Gladstone say of this

Britain? Where are the Liberals of England? Where are the democrats? I am ruined. These swine have ruined me. Ach, you have some frightful people in England. Your poor people are the most evil in the world. They are dirty. They are ignorant. They are beastly. Germany would be ashamed to have such people. You do not find such people in the whole of Germany—so dirty, so ignorant, so barbarous, such savages. Pah, they make me sick, these filthy people of yours. Look what they have done? They steal my goods, they break my windows, they ruin my business. Yes, I am ruined—I who have the papers of your Government, I who have sons fighting in the British Army."

Mrs. Pommer endeavored by soothing words to stem this torrent of complaint, but her effort was quite hopeless. Pommer began to walk about the parlor, growing more and more indignant, flinging his arms about, snorting with contempt, snarling with rage.

"It is not only the dirty poor who are vile," he continued. "Your newspapers are still viler. They are responsible for all this. They sneer at Germany about the scrap of paper, but they are tearing up the scrap of paper which made me a British subject. Hypocrites! Liars! Scoundrels! Did not the Government guarantee me all the privileges of a British subject? Was not that our agreement, as solemn as the agreement of Belgium's neutrality? Yes, and now these stinking newspapers of yours are calling out, Intern

them, Intern them, Intern the lot of them! Is that justice? Is that honesty? Is that liberty and fair-play? I am a British subject. I pay my taxes. My sons are British soldiers. And now they say I am to be treated like a foreigner, like a traitor. I am not to be tried in a court of law. I am to be seized, carried off without trial, and locked up in a prison—my wife left to starve, and my business ruined. But what about my nationalization papers? Ach, England is just as bad as Prussia! Democracy is dead here. There is no free speech. There is no liberty. Despotism is here just as it is in Germany and Russia."

When Christopher was able to speak he said to the infuriated baker, "No words can exaggerate the shamefulness of this attack upon your property. I feel a deep indignation about it. It fills me with grief and sorrow. It is a most cruel, cowardly, and disgraceful act. But it is the act of a handful of people—of people we should try to be sorry for, their very degradation witnessing against us for our neglect of them. It is not the act of a nation. It is not an act of England. England is full of very kind people, people of generous instincts, just-minded, upright honorable people. Do not lose your faith in England. You know how I hate this war, and how I believe that nothing but evil can come of it: but I do not despair of the human race because there are in all countries people who are kind and fair. Think of the goodness in England at this moment! Millions of money are being subscribed to

alleviate the sufferings of war. People are giving up their houses and lands. Thousands of people are volunteering to work in hospitals without fee or reward. The whole nation is touched by the universal suffering. Workmen in the factories agree to reductions from their weekly wages for the Belgians and the Serbians. In every village there are committees working for the wounded. Ladies who never did any manual labor before are scrubbing hospital floors and waiting like servants on the trained nurses. Surely all this is on the side of goodness. Don't despair of England. See your sufferings in a just light. A few ignorant people have done you this injury, and are now probably ashamed of their conduct. Send for the glazier. Get your windows mended. Open your shop. Show the neighborhood that you trust its sense of fair-play. Believe me, you are not ruined. Courage will carry you through."

Mrs. Pommer supported this argument, in her rather dreary way, but Pommer stuck out for a long time, declaring that his custom was gone, that there was no justice in England, and that he would very soon find himself marched off into an internment camp. However, chiefly owing to the vigorous championship which Christopher's argument received from his daughter, who was engaged to be married to an engineer and felt herself to be not merely English but an out-and-out Londoner, Pommer consented to re-open his shop and carry on business as if nothing had happened.

A few weeks afterwards Jane reported to Christopher that she had been to see the Pommers, and that they were in a state of the greatest dejection. No further attack had been made upon the shop, but custom had departed. Anonymous letters, enclosing accounts of German atrocities from the newspapers, were received by almost every post, and insults of a most horrible kind were always being chalked up on the shutters at night. Mr. Pommer, she reported, had sunk into a condition of the utmost despair.

On the day when James started for the front with his division, news reached Pommer that he was to be interned. Christopher had gone to say good-bye to James, and to sit with his mother afterwards, who was quite broken-down by this departure. He heard nothing of the internment notice till next day.

As soon as they were able to do so he and Jane hurried round to the shop. They found the windows shuttered, and a small crowd gathered before the door.

Pommer had destroyed himself.

CHAPTER VII

A STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

AN event of some importance to this history occurred soon after it became apparent that the Coalition Government would be obliged to enforce military service. This event was the marriage of Arthur Sterling to Lady Louisa Hubbard, the youngest and only unmarried daughter of old Lord Reigate.

This sacrament was celebrated a few weeks before romantic ladies from America were deprived of a well-known and picturesque sight of fashionable London, namely the morning ride in the Park of the old earl, jogging along, with his arms flapping, and his hands, in lemon-colored gloves, held high against his black stock. Many will remember his little bobtailed grey with its brisk quick action in walking, which always suggested that it was just on the very point of trotting. It was said that nobody had ever seen it do anything but walk.

Lord Reigate at that time was as handsome a survival of the old world as any American could hope to see in modern London. He still wore a towering top hat of the stove-pipe variety, pressed hard down

on his red ears, and still sported trousers of a shepherd's plaid pattern strapped under sharp-pointed boots of a superlative varnish. In spite of his immense age and the heavy cross of enforced abstinence, his round face still preserved its richness of alcoholic coloring and its expression of a jovial stupidity. He looked as incorrigible as he would have been if age had not prevented. His glittering smile, his loud voice, and his chuckling laughter manifested no disposition on his part towards repentance. He was as vain of his great age as he had been of his great sins, and he still believed that all the women who stared as he rode by were in love with him.

This old gentleman, falling into his dotage after a life of great devotion to flesh of every kind, never could be persuaded by the members of his family to treat Arthur Sterling with even a show of respect. He had never liked him, and now he hated him. He would sit in his big chair before a roaring fire in the library, his legs stretched out towards the fender, talking to himself for an hour together on the subject of this new son-in-law.

"Damn the fellow's impertinence," he would say; "comes in here: talks to my daughter behind my back: bamboozles her: twists her round his finger: and, damme, marries her— yes, by— —marries her! Was ever such a thing as that? And then has the impertinence to offer to live with me!"

In vain did his children seek to convert their father

to a kinder view of Arthur Sterling. Nothing could change him. His prejudices were of iron. He spoke of him as "the marauding bridegroom," or "Louisa's sorcerer," or "that fat fellow with the grin." He was convinced that Sterling had married his daughter as a step to some nefarious scheme hidden behind his grinning mask.

He was not altogether wrong.

Arthur felt, when military compulsion loomed more and more steadily on the horizon, that a married man would stand a better chance of exemption than a bachelor. He made up his mind to contemplate marriage. At this stage he considered marriage from another point of view—the point of view of the social world. There were many very pretty women in the beautiful world whom he could have brought himself to marry, but there was considerable doubt in his mind whether any of these gracious creatures could be hurried into matrimony with him. He then regarded his marriage from the point of view of political influence, thus narrowing down the field of his operations to workable dimensions. A little thought turned his affections towards Louisa.

She was neither young nor beautiful: but she was a very sensible, clear-headed, and jolly person of just over thirty, with extraordinarily nice manners, and something about her which made people say that she was as true as steel. She dressed anyhow, spoke in a deep voice, and laughed with a real heartiness. She

was a serious person as well as a jolly person. She worked on committees, made speeches on social subjects, and read blue books. At the same time she rode perfectly, was not a bad shot, and loved fishing with a genuine ardor.

Arthur had always been on terms of friendship with this pleasant person, but until conscription came had never dreamed of her as a bride. Perhaps nobody in all London had ever thought of Louisa Hubbard in that capacity. What chiefly attracted Arthur Sterling in Louisa was her political connections. Her brother and brothers-in-law were in the thick of politics: one of them a cabinet minister, another an ex-minister, and a third a person of importance in diplomacy. As to her cousins the decorative side of the government of the empire seemed to be almost entirely in their hands. Arthur had long cultivated these people and now cultivating them still more assiduously he began to cultivate in himself a higher seriousness, a graver patriotism.

Soon after his engagement to Louisa he appeared at his club wearing a badge. No one ever quite understood what that badge signified. It evidently signified something of a very secret nature. Sterling never said what it was. He spoke darkly of the Foreign Office, referred on occasions to the Ministry of Munitions, but never got nearer to a definition of his functions than to speak of them as "war work." Whatever that war work was, it did not prevent him from sitting for

an hour or two after his luncheon in the smoking-room of his club, or from visiting the theatres with all the affection and constancy of his pre-war days. Wherever he went he wore his badge in his button-hole.

Old Anthony Sterling was highly amused by this marriage, describing it as a miracle. It was the one relief he experienced in his agony of anxiety at James's presence in the trenches. He took a great fancy to Louisa, but could not for the life of him imagine why such a sensible woman should have married "our Corney Grain." He would sometimes break into a little delighted laugh, and asked by his wife what he was thinking of would reply, "Arthur's sacrifice of himself on the altar of patriotism." He saw very well what was in the mind of the future Lord Chancellor.

"All I hope is," he would say, "that Louisa will make a man of him. He's not a bad fellow. There's the right stuff in him. A strong woman might pull him out of his husk of selfishness. I hope she'll do it."

Lord Reigate refused for some months to meet any of the Sterling family after the wedding. He said that he would meet none of "that gang." Louisa, however, was so essential to his happiness, and so patient and tactful in her management of him, that as he sank further and deeper into his dotage she was able to get her way with him, and very soon after their honeymoon she and Arthur took up their quarters in the London house. By this time the old gentleman was so far gone that he quite forgot Louisa's marriage, and

whenever he encountered Arthur, mistaking him now for a piano-tuner, now for a man come to wind the clocks, and now for his valet, would either swear at him or give him some absurd instructions which no gentleman engaged in important war work could have thought of obeying.

The one member of the Sterling family whom this wreck of a tough old sinner ever countenanced, was Langton, now a brigadier-general. He never remembered Langton's name, but when that fine soldier was home on leave and came to see him, old Reigate would sparkle up into an amazing vivacity and talk about the war with all the conviction of a military critic in the newspapers.

His great dictum was, "Kitchener's no good. He's an Oriental. He's fat, slow, lazy — a stupid fellow, much over-rated." He would then suggest ideas: "The man you want out there is Buller, and the man you want here at the War Office is Smith, the newspaper man—a great organizer, a man of business, started life without a bob, made a million, got into parliament, and now look where he is! These Germans will never be beat by gentlemen. They don't understand gentlemen. What we've got to do is to put ourselves into the hands of tradesmen. Those are the chaps to beat the Boche, tradesmen. Asquith's no good. I'd impeach him for not preparing for this war. Gladstone's a windbag. I always said he was. I told the Queen so, and she agreed with me. Smith's the man, Smith and Joe

Chamberlain. Damn the lawyers! I never trusted one of them, and I don't mean to begin now."

Long after the lamented death of Lord Kitchener this old gentleman was abusing him for a bungler and declaring that we should never win the war while he was chasing De Wet in kid gloves. "What we want," he used to say, "is national service and a thumping tariff to keep the Germans out."

When at last conscription came, Arthur Sterling was so completely imbedded in war work that the law never thought of disturbing him. As for Lord Reigate he had forgotten the war and was rattling away about fox-hunting, Connie Gilchrist, Sylvia Grey, and some old crony of his to whom he always referred, chuckling and dribbling, as "that wicked little devil Dickey Dead-eye." No one ever knew who it was.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MADNESS OF CHRISTOPHER

IN the mind of Christopher, laboring among the unhappy and oppressed in the Borough, this threat of conscription produced a very different effect from that which governed the conduct of his brother Arthur.

To Christopher, cherishing in the midst of overwhelming sordidness his dream of heaven on earth, and holding quietly fast at the very center of uncompromising materialism to his conviction of a spiritual reality, this policy of compulsion seemed like a dagger at the heart of humanity.

If England, he argued, resorted to conscription Prussian autocracy could boast of a triumph over the foremost apostle of democracy. Human progress was already checked by this terrible war, but if England submitted to militarism that progress would be hurled back into the night and darkness of the world. So deeply was he convinced of this, so horrible to him appeared the degradation of forced military service, that he abandoned his seclusion, attached himself to the No-Conscription Fellowship, and became one of

its principal speakers at public meetings. In this crusade he seemed to lose the modesty of his shrinking character, and to become a man so enthusiastic for a cause that he could transcend his own nature.

Mankind, it has been said by one of the most able of English philosophers, may be divided into two classes—those capable of belief in something (no matter what) and those incapable of all belief. "It is to be feared," he says, "that the latter are much the larger class, at any rate among politicians. To them the man who has a faith is unintelligible. They will assume that he is in the pay of some sinister interest; that he is actuated by love of notoriety; or that he is endeavoring to acquire a following whom he may sell for a price when his career is more advanced. If all these explanations fail, they shrug their shoulders and decide that he is mad. They forget that 'madmen' have done all the most notable work in the world: they have been the religious leaders, the pioneers in science and art, even the inventors of the master ideas of politics."

By the majority of his world Christopher was pronounced mad. These people, incapable of belief in anything at all, could not understand the logical effects of belief in a mind supremely honest, and in a heart passionately sincere. They expected people who professed belief in religion to behave exactly like those who did not believe in religion. In the same way, they expected those who professed faith in the principles of democracy, even to the point of expressing sym-

pathy with the moral ideas of socialism, to order their lives exactly as members of the Primrose League, the Jockey Club, or the House of Lords ordered theirs. In the defence of these people it may be said that the Christians and democrats of their particular world never gave them any reason for doubting the logic of this expectation. It was quite impossible in this social world to distinguish a Christian from an atheist, or a liberal from an absolute tory.

Christopher was pronounced mad. Mrs. Fanning laid the blame upon his mother. Violet, a much-photographed war-widow, declared it was the fault of his wife. Other people said it was due to the influence of the fanatic Stephen Hobhouse; others attributed the fatal influence to Tolstoy; others said it came from overstudy; and others again declared that he had been "bitten by Fabianism" while he was at Balliol. No one, especially among the religious, ascribed the madness of Christopher Sterling to the founder of the Christian religion. The one point on which they all agreed was that Christopher had lost his wits.

To General Langton Sterling, whose breast was now brilliant with many ribbons, British, French, Italian, and Russian ribbons, and who was becoming just at this time something of a national hero, Christopher's public appearances as an opponent of conscription appeared to be both deplorable and reprehensible. He wrote home on the subject, using the language of restraint, but expressing himself with great good sense

and a very impressive firmness. He was pained beyond measure. He told his parents that conscription was vitally essential. He said that a disaster of the greatest magnitude would befall the allied armies if Britain weakened in her efforts. He begged them to see Christopher and try to convert him to the view that this was a war of Christendom against paganism, of light against darkness, of God against Satan, a war in which every man who confessed the name of Christ should go forth with an unconquerable soul against the legions of hell.

Arthur Sterling, of course, was simply furious. He said that Christopher was bringing disgrace upon the family, and making the name of Sterling ridiculous. He sat down and wrote Christopher an indignant letter, a letter of the most scathing sarcasm, every phrase calculated to wound, every argument bitter with contempt, a letter which not only made mincemeat of the pacifist thesis but which, with a quite brutal frankness, accused Christopher of cowardice.

James, to whom a commission had just been given, and who was suffering almost intolerable anguish in the midst of the most dreadful slaughter, yet holding himself outwardly with a perfectly magnificent valor, contented himself with trying to understand Christopher's position. He thought that his brother was wrong, but did not abuse him.

"What we have got to do," he wrote home to his mother, "is not to judge Christopher, but to see

that our war aims are identical with his peace aims."

He saw that the ideal to which Christopher was straining with all the strength of his soul was the same ideal for which the best youth of Britain believed itself to be fighting in the midst of violent death. He told himself that Christopher represented Christ more faithfully than he did, that he had made the great sacrifice, that he was in absolute truth a disciple of love, and that he saw with larger and other eyes than his the great vision of humanity's future; but he did not yield an inch in his conviction that to fight the German in the name of England, if not the name of Christ, was the most righteous duty of every man who loved that name even as he loved his mother and his own honor.

The letters which they received from Langton and James were very often discussed by Mr. and Mrs. Sterling.

Old Mr. Sterling greatly disliked the publicity which newspapers were giving to the proceedings of Christopher. Every meeting Christopher attempted to address, which was broken up by an organized hostile crowd, furnished certain newspapers with the excuse for denouncing him as a traitor. Old Mr. Sterling hated all this. It added a great deal of distress to the anxiety preying upon his mind as to the safety of James. He grew much more silent, aged with a noticeable swiftness, and began to suffer in his health.

Mrs. Sterling hated Christopher's propaganda, and could not understand it. Her vigorous mind saw very

clearly that conscription was essential. She disliked the principle of conscription, as much as she disliked living under the ignominy of the Defence of the Realm Act. But she saw the vital difference between a measure of conscription imposed by an autocracy on a servile people, and conscription freely adopted by an enfranchised democracy in its own defence.

"I cannot understand what has happened to Christopher's reasoning powers," she said on one occasion. "He used to be so logical. My one anxiety for him used to be that he could not make up his mind to any line of action because he was so caught by the two sides of every question. He was the last person in the world, I should have said, to become a faddist."

Mr. Sterling replied: "There was a phrase in James's last letter which struck me a good deal. He said that Christopher had got the logic of Jesus but not his feeling. Don't you think that that is what is the matter with him? The dear boy has thought out his religion as if it were a problem in Euclid. He has not proceeded, as James has proceeded, to feel it as a poem. What a disaster it is! What a thousand pities! Dear me, dear me, to think that any son of mine should be a subject of obloquy in the newspapers."

"That doesn't trouble me," said Mrs. Sterling. "These same newspapers were denouncing Mr. Lloyd George much more violently a few days ago. What troubles me is that he should be wrong."

"Yes, of course, of course," replied Mr. Sterling,

"that's the worst thing of all: that he should be wrong."

"And what troubles me even more," she went on, "is the thought of what will happen to him when this act is passed."

"What do you mean?"

"He'll defy it; he'll refuse to obey it."

"But, my dear Elizabeth, that's impossible. You can't disobey an act of Parliament. You may oppose a bill while it's in the House of Commons, but you must submit to an act of Parliament. Why, dear me, that's foundational to democratic government."

"Remember the suffragettes!"

"But, good heavens, Elizabeth, you don't mean to tell me that Christopher will descend to such monstrous behavior as that! Why, this is ten thousand times worse than anything I had imagined. They'll arrest him. They'll lock him up. He'll be put in prison."

"Yes, he'll certainly go to prison."

"Oh, dear, but this is horrible."

"Christopher may be wrong, but he isn't a coward. He's one of God's fools; one of those men who will suffer anything for their faith."

"But to go to prison——"

"That is what troubles me more than anything else; for I am sure it will kill him."

"Send for him, send for him, Elizabeth. I must talk to him. This must be stopped. Send for him at once. I'll go down on my knees to him. I'll implore

him not to do this thing. I can't bear the thought of it. Ring the bell, and we'll send a telegram at once. He must come here: he really must."

Mrs. Sterling rang the bell, while her husband wrote out a telegram to Christopher asking him to come immediately. But when the message had been dispatched she warned her husband that even if he went down on his knees to Christopher, Christopher would keep on his way.

The conversation between father and son was of a most moving nature. It occurred late at night, for Christopher did not receive the telegram till the evening, on his return from work for the Emergency Committee. He feared that his mother had heard ill news of James, and in consequence he arrived at the house greatly shaken, and utterly unprepared for any attack upon his faith. The servant informed him that his father was waiting for him in the library—a room on the ground floor.

Mr. Sterling began, very affectionately, by deprecating Christopher's present action in opposing conscription. He then proceeded to point out that it was the duty of every just man in a democratic state to obey without question the decisions of Parliament. From this, rather nervously, he went to the question of Christopher's future position when the act making military service compulsory received the Royal assent.

"I hope," he said, "that you will set a good example to the rest of the nation. I hope, my dear boy, that

you will not allow personal feelings to prevent you from giving a most loyal obedience to your country's command, however much you disapprove of it. You are within your rights at present: I perfectly recognize that: I deplore your opposition to this bill, but I see that it is constitutional: you have a perfect right, however wrong most of us think you may be, to oppose the passing of this measure; but once passed, Christopher, once passed, it is your bounden duty to obey it."

Christopher replied that in his opinion it was the duty of a citizen to obey every act of Parliament, however disagreeable it might be, except in such instances as those where the decisions of Parliament were flagrant violations of the citizen's inherent right and duty to obey his conscience.

His father challenged this doctrine. He said that the term conscience might very easily become a synonym for prejudices which were detrimental to the peaceful evolution of a free society. "This very war," he said, "with all its horrors and ruin, was brought about to a very considerable extent by just such a principle as you enunciate. It is perfectly certain in my judgment that Germany would never have taken the immense hazard of war if she had been unequivocally certain that we should intervene. What made our intervention seem to her uncertain, improbable, indeed almost impossible, was the mutinous condition of Ireland. And what had brought Ireland to that menacing condition, but the action of Sir Edward Car-

son and the minority of northeast Ulster in threatening to withstand an act of Parliament? You cannot have disobedience to an act of Parliament in a democratic country. It cannot be tolerated. The choice for society is between an autocratic form of government in which obedience is enforced, and a democratic form of government in which obedience is rendered. Between these two there is nothing but anarchy."

Christopher's answer was that there is a higher law than State law, and that the citizen who acknowledges God as the law of his conscience cannot possibly render obedience to a State law which runs counter to a manifest law of God.

"Then do you think," demanded his father, raising his eyebrows, and utterly surprised by such a statement, "that Sir Edward Carson was justified in arming the Unionists of Ulster?"

"Certainly not."

Mr. Sterling's face cleared. "Ah, I didn't think you would. But, Christopher, many Ulstermen based their resistence to the Home Rule act on religious grounds!"

"With rifles in their hands?" asked Christopher, he in his turn raising his eyebrows.

"But——"

Mr. Sterling saw what he meant. "You mean that resistance to an act of Parliament should be passive?" he inquired.

"Of course. All violence is opposed to the religious law."

"Then you intend passively to resist an act making military service compulsory?"

"Yes."

"I beg you not to."

"In my case there will probably be no need to resist," replied Christopher; "for I am a Quaker. The Government has always recognized the special position of Quakers in this matter."

Mr. Sterling felt a great weight lift from his heart. He could have laughed, he was so relieved, so happy.

"Ah!" he cried, "your mother and I never thought of that."

"But," continued Christopher, "I shall advise all others who object to military service on moral and political grounds to resist the act. I am bound to do so."

"I implore you to do no such thing."

"Why?"

"Because it would be wrong and hazardous. It would get you into trouble. Your mother and I are both convinced that you are wrong. It will distress us beyond measure if you do any such thing. We both feel that our load is—heavy enough, heavy enough."

His lips twitched, and he fumbled hastily for his handkerchief, getting up from his chair and walking away.

Christopher was moved. "How can I disobey so kind a father," he asked gravely, "and so sweet a mother? I have known nothing at your hands but

utmost kindness; all the days of childhood and youth were made beautiful by your love; and all the impulses of my spirit which seem to carry me nearest to God I received from you and from my mother—for the foundation of everything in the home was love."

"Ah!" cried Mr. Sterling, standing at a little distance, "I look back upon those days, those golden days, as our first parents must have looked back to the Garden of Eden. What good times they were! How happy we all were together—you boys and Sibyl, your mother and I. I don't know what God can do for us in the next world better than that."

He came back to Christopher, putting away his handkerchief, though his eyes were still wet, and shaking his head rather sadly, a sorrowful smile on his lips, said as if playfully, "You were the first, you remember, to break away. The sunlight seemed to go out of the house and out of the garden when you went off on that tramp abroad. It was never the same again."

Christopher could hardly trust himself to speak. He nodded his head and admitted, "Yes, I was the first to go."

His father said to him, "Come back to us now, you and Jane; we are very lonely together, your mother and I. Why not come and take care of us till the war is over?"

Christopher looked into his father's eyes, which were still wet with tears, and felt his heart pierced and pierced again, reading there the loneliness, the suffer-

ing, and the hunger of a spirit whose moral nobility shone clear through all the weakness of its human affections.

"My dearest father," he replied, "far more easily could I disobey the most serious commands of the State than the very least of your wishes; believe me, that comes from my heart: but I have surrendered my will to God, and I must needs go where He orders. Don't ask me, if you can help it, to look back. One day, I am sure of it, all will be made plain to us, and our happiness will be greater than anything we can imagine; but here in this world there must be partings and sufferings, for it is a world, isn't it, which refuses to do God's will?"

Mr. Sterling remained standing before his son. His face was as if frozen into a deathlike solemnity. He was thinking of the agony and bloody sweat of the world, and asking himself how he could dream of shirking the full weight of his share in this bitter anguish of all mankind. The whole world was being mangled in the fell clutches of war, and he was thinking of his individual grief. What a coward he had been! How weakly he had shown himself in the eyes of this dear son of his, who, however misguided, was a noble fellow and infinitely dear to him. He felt himself shaken from head to foot, and shrunken to littleness. By a great effort of will he recovered himself and reached up to the full stature of his manhood.

"That is what we must hope," he said, slowly and

gravely, heaving a deep sigh, his whole face expressing doubt and despair; "some day it may be made plain to us: some day perhaps we shall understand: but now, in this day, the burden. Yes, you are right. You are perfectly right, my dear fellow. The only thing for us to do is to bear the burden as bravely as we can. Each man must bear his own burden."

Christopher stood up and embraced his father.

As they hung together for a moment, the old man and the young, father and son united in the bonds of love, Christopher said, "I think it makes the burden easier if we try to bear one another's burdens as well."

Mr. Sterling, shaking off his sorrow, glad and happy to have his arms round his boy, kissed him affectionately on both cheeks. Then, smiling bravely, he said in a cheerful voice, "Yes, that's the only religion I understand, and I shall try to follow it more faithfully in the future—in the few years that are left. We've got to be less selfish, to think more of other people's sorrows; yes, that's the moral law. And now, my dear fellow, come upstairs for a moment to see your mother. Don't be afraid. You shan't be bothered. I'll tell her to keep off controversial matters."

They went upstairs to the drawing-room arm in arm, and Mr. Sterling said to Christopher, hugging his son's arm to him, "Isn't this jolly? Like old times, isn't it?"

He seemed to be perfectly happy.

CHAPTER IX

PLAIN CLOTHES

"HOW sweet! how sweet! Just listen to it!" This from Christopher, who stood at the open window of the kitchen-parlor, one hand in a shoe, the other hand, which held a boot-brush, lifted to attract his wife's attention. She paused in her stirring of the porridge, turned her head to him, and listened—wondering what he could mean. Into the room, sounding above the traffic's rumble, came the singing of a canary. It floated up to the window-sill, trill after trill, and there seemed to merge itself into the gladness of the sunshine which streamed into the little kitchen.

Jane nodded her head, making Christopher smile, and then they stood listening and smiling while the canary sang to them from a window on the opposite side of the court.

Then Jane said to him, whispering the words: "I wish you always looked like that."

"How do I look?" he asked, rather listening to the bird than listening for her answer.

"Ten years younger," she replied.

At that he seemed to come out of his entrancement,

and went on with his polishing. But as he polished he looked out of the window every now and then at the little speck of yellow in a cage down below. "I know why I look younger," he said, speaking aloud. "The song of a bird always makes me think of the country, and thought of the country always makes me happy."

When they were sitting at their breakfast Jane said to him, "Don't you think, if we worked very hard for the next week, that we might get three or four days together in the country before they come to take you?"

"Wouldn't that be splendid?" he exclaimed, looking up quickly. "Yes, we can easily do it. I'm nearly dead now, but a spurt won't hurt in the least with the thought of the country to keep me going. Let's do it."

That phrase of Jane's "before they come to take you" referred to Christopher's expected arrest at the hands of the police. This arrest might come fairly soon, but his calling-up notice had not yet arrived, and so far as they had been able to ascertain his arrest was not likely to happen for perhaps a fortnight or three weeks.

Christopher was now deemed by the military authorities to be a deserter. His indignation at what he considered to be the perjury of the Government had made him refuse medical examination before the tribunal which examined him—a tribunal which was supposed to administer justly the conscientious clauses of the Military Service Act. In getting this revolutionary act through Parliament the Government had solemnly

promised the most sympathetic treatment for all men called up under that act who entertained genuine religious objections against war. So emphatic had been these promises that Christopher used to smile at his wife's fears for his safety. "Why," he said to her, "you are trying to make out that a British Government is as bad and dishonest as a German Government."

He would quote to her the words of the Prime Minister: "All men whose objections to active military service are founded on honest convictions ought to be able, and will be able, to avail themselves of the exemptions which Parliament has provided.'" He quoted, too, the emphatic words of Lord Kitchener in the House of Lords, "'The genuine conscientious objectors will find themselves under the civil power.'" And as if this were not enough to allay Jane's misgiving, he would proceed to the words of a foremost minister in this matter, the President of the Local Government Board, "'Absolute exemption can be granted in all cases where conditional exemption will not adequately meet the case.'"

When it was found that these promises and assurances were treated as scraps of paper, the indignation of Christopher was as vigorous as his amazement. For a few days he was staggered beyond measure. Men whom he knew for the most noble of fellow-workers, Quakers and Tolstoyans, were subjected to insult and contempt by the tribunals, their claims were dismissed, their arguments were mocked, and they

found themselves soon afterwards in the hands of the police. When his indignation rose up and dispersed this first amazement, he said to his wife, "I will never let these tribunals excuse me on grounds of health. The Government has betrayed its trust. The act is a scandal. I will make my claim on the grounds of conscience, and only on that." This claim was dismissed.

It has never been explained how this manifest law-breaking on the part of the tribunal was permitted. Christopher was a Quaker, and a Quaker preacher before the war began. His opposition to military service was not based on political or on moral grounds but purely on the historic religious grounds which Quakers have always taken on the question of war. Nevertheless Christopher's appeal for exemption, like many another Quaker's appeal, was disallowed and disallowed with clumsy sarcasm and the most open contempt.

Jane and he returned to their workman's flat that day more full of fight than a Quaker would say was good for their souls.

These two people were living a life, it must be understood, which was as different as possible from the life of the vast majority of their fellow-citizens. James, fighting in France, was perhaps the only person concerned who saw the great importance of this fact. "What is the use," he wrote home to his mother, "of trying to see the question of military service as Christopher sees it? How can we do that, when we do not

stand at the angle from which he and Jane see the whole business of life?"

This angle was the angle of a complete, literal, and most childlike faith. Not only did they believe in God, but they believed in the providence of God. Not only did they believe in Christ, but they believed in the mystical indwelling of His presence in their hearts. Every morning of their lives they read the Bible, prayed together, and remained silent for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They considered that the most fateful business of the day was contact with other fellow-creatures, whom they must either help or harm by their contact: and this contact covered the stranger whom they passed in the street, or the person opposite to whom they might sit in train or tram, for they believed with Dostoevsky that a scowling face may damage almost permanently the soul of a child who looks up from its play and shrinks from that frown of anger.

Such being their faith they prepared themselves most solemnly for the commerce of every day, emptying their hearts of all selfishness, meditating upon the infinite love of a heavenly Father, repeating to themselves the teachings of their Saviour. Moreover, they exercised the most scrupulous economy in what they ate and drank, denied themselves all comforts, and at the end of every week gave away to the sorrowful and suffering the money they had been able to save by their abstinence.

People who live in this unusual fashion cannot, as

James argued, see life as those who live in the usual fashion. Everything is seen, not only in a different perspective, but in a different light. The pomps of the world, to those who deeply know and share the miseries of the multitude, appear neither as childishness nor as an affront to good taste, but as an inconceivably bold rejection of religion. And the miseries of the multitude do not appear to such people as the unavoidable penalties of any particular industrial system, but as an infinitely convincing witness to the atheistic basis of society.

As for war, to those who truly believe that God is the Father of the whole family of mankind—and that Christ unfolded the one secret of the world's deliverance from evil when he said that we were to love our enemies and to pray for them that persecute us—how can they regard murderous war as anything but the most intolerable and absolute of all atheisms?

This was the position of Christopher Sterling. It can be stated, but it cannot be understood except by those who share his opinions. James saw very clearly that it was impossible for Christopher to look upon military service as Langton looked upon it or as he himself looked upon it. He did not say that neither Langton nor himself were Christians. His view was that they were Christians of two different schools. He regarded Langton as the most admirable specimen of the good Churchman—upright, loyal, fearless, conservative, a believer in law and order, a hater of

anarchy and dissidence. Himself he regarded as a very humble unit among those who without believing most of the dogmas of Christianity yet place the figure of Jesus not only in the center of human history, but on the throne of civilization.

How could James see, how could Langton see, the things that Christopher saw? Did they not, in fact, inhabit a different world? It was better for them not to judge him, but to let his morality act as a spur to their morality. James often used a phrase of Edward Caird's in speaking of Christopher. "He is one of those few selected spirits—and it is well for mankind that there are such—who cannot find their true sphere except in a life devoted to general interests, a life of philanthropic self-denial." James made no bones about the matter. He said that Christopher was a saint.

Christopher was certainly convinced that in withstanding the Military Service Act he was following the commandments of his Master. There is no question of that. There is also no question that under the very act he ought to have been exempted.

When Jane proposed to him the idea of four days' retirement in the country he embraced it with an extraordinary zest chiefly for a reason which he did not then impart to her, knowing how it would distress her. He embraced it with this great zest because he wanted to bear without any flinching the hardships of prison, and because during the last few weeks he had been feeling the strain of his work in a manner which

reminded him of his mortality. He shrank from the idea of breaking down under a test of his faith. "Whatever happens," he told himself, "I must stick it out."

He and Jane now slaved to the point of exhaustion every day, going round to relieve the War Victims over a very wide area of London, every night meeting in their home and saying to each other, "Only four more days, only three more days: and then we shall be free."

He slept very badly at this time, his head being so crowded with business. He would lie for hours after he had put his head on the pillow, thinking of the miseries he had relieved that day, and of the miseries he must relieve to-morrow. His sleep was disturbed by dreams. He would wake quite suddenly, from what had seemed to him a night's sleep, and find that it had only been a sleep of half an hour. Some of his dreams were full of terror.

On the last day of all before this longed-for excursion to the hills he received the notice calling him up for military service. He said to Jane that it might be ten days or more before the police were sent to fetch him and that whatever happened they would still go for their holiday. Late that night he suddenly remembered he had not visited Mrs. Pommer, who was now living in considerable distress. He said to Jane, "Let us will ourselves to wake half an hour earlier so that I may run to Mrs. Pommer before breakfast."

Their wills worked. Both of them woke as the clock struck half-past five. When they were dressed and had finished their religious observances, Jane said to him, "I'll see to everything; you go off and get back as quickly as possible." But Christopher insisted upon fulfilling all the little household tasks which normally fell to his lot.

When he was gone Jane packed their clothes in a portmanteau, singing a hymn as she did it, and then carried the bag into the kitchen, and placed it where it should meet Christopher's eyes directly he entered the room. She was busy at the fire, expecting him back every minute, when some one rang at the door. She wiped her hands on her apron and went to see which of their neighbors had called so early.

A stranger stood there. He was a tallish, square-shouldered, and rather corpulent man, red-faced, with a reddish moustache, and kindly round eyes. He asked if Mr. Sterling lived there.

She said to him, "You have come——" but could not find the words.

"It's an unpleasant duty," said the plain-clothes man, "but it's a duty, and I've got to do it. Is he in?"

"No, but he'll be here in a minute. Will you come in!"

The policeman took off his hat and stepped inside, wiping his feet with great energy on the mat. When this operation was concluded, Jane closed the door, and went before him into the kitchen.

"I was just getting breakfast. May I offer you a cup of tea?"

"Thank you; I'd be very glad," answered the policeman looking about him with professional interest.

The portmanteau attracted his notice. "You weren't thinking of going off, were you?" he asked chaffingly.

Jane explained the portmanteau.

"Ah, that's too bad!" he exclaimed; "too bad, really it is." He was genuinely distressed. "Well there," he said, "I call that downright bad luck."

He sat down at the breakfast table, his hat in his lap.

While she was preparing the tea he said to her, "I've often heard of Mr. Sterling, though I've never seen him. People down here speak very well of him. He has got a good name. He has been a real friend to many poor people round about here. It's a great pity he should have got himself into trouble over this conscription affair."

"He feels it his duty to oppose conscription."

"I know he does; but I can't understand it. What I mean to say is this: if my son goes to the war, and faces death for his country, is my neighbor's lout of a boy to sneak into his job? That doesn't seem right, does it?"

"No; it seems very hard."

"And if the country says that all have got to take a fair share in keeping the Huns out of England, why should a man be excused simply because he doesn't like

killing? I don't suppose anybody actually likes killing. But it has got to be done. If we don't kill them, they'll certainly kill us. There's no uncertainty about that, is there? And look what the beasts did in Belgium—worse than any savages. No sugar, thank you. I like it well enough, but I've got my waist measurement to consider."

At this point the front door opened, and Christopher entered the kitchen in a rush exclaiming, "And now we're free!"

On seeing the plain-clothes constable, who rose awkwardly from his seat by the breakfast table, Christopher went as white as the cloth. For a moment, so extreme and overwhelming was his disappointment, all the manhood seemed to go out of him. He visibly quailed, visibly shrank.

But before the policeman could speak, and just before Jane had begun to explain, he pulled himself together. He smiled rather sadly, went forward, and putting out his hand to the policeman said quietly, "Welcome, friend."

The constable said that he did not see why he should disturb their breakfast, since he felt quite sure that if Mr. Sterling gave him his word to be at the police-court at ten o'clock that word would not be broken.

"No; it will not be broken," said Christopher.

"I'll just finish my cup of tea, and then I'll leave you," said the policeman.

"Won't you stay and breakfast with us?" asked Christopher.

"I think you'd rather be alone together," said the plain-clothes man; "in any case I've already had one breakfast so I don't want a second. As I was saying to your good lady just now, I've got my waist measurement to think of."

He laughed over his joke, shook hands, and departed very amiably.

When Christopher came back from the door, Jane was standing in the middle of the kitchen, waiting for him, her eyes questioning his, her whole attitude one of dumb helplessness.

Not far away from her was the little portmanteau which she had packed for the holiday.

He went to her with a smile and took her very gently into his arms. Then he said to her, speaking close to her ear, "Think of what our soldiers have to face: think of what their women have to endure; there is courage in the human heart sufficient for anything and a courage greater even than that. Now come along to breakfast and let me tell you some good news. Mrs. Pommer has got a job in spite of her name, and the eldest girl is going out to service next week."

While they stood there the canary down below sang as if its heart must burst, it was so happy.

CHAPTER X

HANDED OVER

ONE of the neighbors who had seen the plain-clothes man arrive, and who had watched him from the court below ascend to the top floor—for the narrow stone staircase of the tenement, with its heavy iron rail, had windowless openings at every stage—put the exciting news about that Mr. Sterling was "nabbed."

Therefore when Christopher and Jane came down the stairs they found all the doors open or half-open, with people standing there either to bid them good-bye or to peep at them. On the ground floor an old woman, very ill and feeble, stood in the doorway, shaking her gray head, weeping without sound, and looking the very picture of despair. Christopher approached her with a cheerful smile. She shook her head still more, threw up her poor old hands, and wept more visibly, though still without sound.

"You mustn't be sorry for me," said Christopher, taking her hand. The withered face so full of the wrinkles of suffering and sorrow seemed to him like the face of the whole world. "I shall soon come back,"

he said gently; "and my wife will look after you while I am away."

The old dame clung to his hand, squeezing it tight between both of hers, and stared up into his face, shaking her head as if to say, "It's no use your saying anything, no use pretending you'll ever come back: my heart is broken, my heart is broken."

When he tried to take his hand away she suddenly lifted it up, pressed it against her shrunken breast, and then bent her head and kissed it, tears falling fast, a little faint sound of sobs coming from her lips. Then, flinging a look of wild grief at him, she turned and shuffled back into her home, closing the door with swiftness as if to shut out a sight which her old eyes could endure no longer. She had spoken not a single word.

In the court a number of women stood waiting to say good-bye. They did not approach; but, laughing or smiling, waved their hands and called out cheery words of farewell. At the last moment one of them, a great buxom woman with her hair combed tight off her forehead and tied up in a knot at the back of her head, rushed over to Christopher and exclaimed in a loud hoarse voice, shaking his hand very heartily, "If they put the likes of you in prison, Mr. Sterling, all I can say is that the likes of them ought to be put into hell-fire for the duration of the war."

As Christopher and Jane made their way up the street he said to her that it would cheer him up in his

work to know that she was carrying on their work of neighborliness.

"I know I need not tell you," he said, "that what I am going to endure for our cause is as nothing in comparison with what the soldiers are enduring for theirs. And our cause, of course, is infinitely the greater. Our cause is not a flag, or a country, or a system of morality. Men are willing to suffer fearfully for such things. But our cause is a better world, a union of all the nations in love and peace, and God's will here upon earth."

When they arrived at the police station, Christopher was taken into custody, while Jane was told that she might go into the court. She found a few shabby people sitting on a bench at the back of the building, speaking in subdued voices as though they were in church. In the body of the court two or three uniformed policemen without helmets were laughing and talking together in good humor as they went to and fro with printed papers in their hands. She was struck by the contrast which the well-fed appearance of these policemen made with the look of starvation on the faces of the ragged people at the back of the court.

Doors opened from time to time, admitting people who had official business with the court, solicitors and witnesses. A man whom she took to be the court missionary came in and stood looking about him with a benign smile on his face. He was joined presently by a kind-looking woman, dressed like a deaconess,

whom Jane learned later on was the lady missionary.

As she sat in her corner of a pew, the plain-clothes man came to her and said, "I've brought some one to keep you company: don't let him run away, will you?" —and stepping on one side he made room for Christopher to pass. Jane's face lit up. She looked at the plain-clothes man with a shining gratitude, and said impetuously, "How kind you are! thank you, thank you!"

Christopher put his hand on hers as he sat at her side and said, "They were all extraordinarily nice to me. In fact they couldn't have been kinder. No harshness at all. I begin to think that the modern version of martyrdom is rather tame."

In a few minutes the court seemed to be quite full. There was now a buzz of conversation. A couple of reporters sat at a table sharpening pencils and talking together, their note-books open in front of them. Solicitors' clerks stood at the table in the center of the court looking about them, with formidable documents under their arms, their hands in their pockets. Policemen became more numerous. The clerk of the court entered, and took his place under the bench, busying himself immediately with a number of papers. Soon afterwards a loud voice called out for silence, and the buzz of voices ceased with a suddenness which was rather striking. People rose to their feet.

The magistrate went to his chair, sat down blowing his nose very vigorously, and began looking at the

papers in front of him. The clerk stood up to speak to him, and the magistrate leaned forward to hear what he had to say, still rubbing the end of his nose. At the end of the clerk's communication he nodded his head, sat back in his chair, and putting his handkerchief away began to fish for his eyeglasses.

"He seems quite a pleasant person," Christopher whispered to his wife.

She exclaimed suddenly, "Oh, look at those poor women!"

Three women stood in the dock. They were very foul to look at, with a sullenness of expression which was horrible to see, a sullenness which showed no shame for their depravity, but rather vindictive rage against those who had dared to impugn their respectability. One of the women was covered with pimples.

Christopher was at first struck by the slowness of the procedure. A young constable was sworn, and began to tell his story in brief jerky sentences, the magistrate and the clerk writing down his words, the magistrate saying "Yes" at the end of each phrase, at which the constable would go on with his labored instalments.

The women were prostitutes and the charge against them was of soliciting soldiers.

When the constable had finished, the magistrate sat back in his chair and looked at the women. "Have you any questions to ask the witness?" he demanded.

They replied that they had, and began firing off the

most fierce questions, leaning over the dock with faces of the most indignant anger. The constable answered them briefly and politely.

When this was over the magistrate, who had been watching the women closely, leaned forward to his papers, and sentenced them to prison. Then he blew his nose and said, "Next case."

They were bustled out of court and another prisoner placed in the dock — a little undersized jail bird charged with stealing a sack of flour. The sack of flour was brought into court and dumped down in front of the dock, causing a good deal of amusement to the policemen.

Christopher's case was taken last of all. Those who had gone before him were all prostitutes and thieves.

The magistrate studied Christopher with interest.

"Are you Christopher Sterling?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

The magistrate nodded his head. "Don't you agree," he inquired, "that it would be a very unfortunate thing for this country if the majority of its men held your views about military service?"

"In that case," replied Christopher, "the majority of men in Germany would hold the same views."

"I'm afraid I do not see how that follows," said the magistrate. "However, argument does not seem to have much effect in these matters. I must fine you five pounds, and you will be handed over to the military authorities." He took out his handkerchief, and

glancing at the clock blew his nose for the last time that morning.

Jane watched Christopher go, and attempted to answer his smile: but she was utterly wretched, almost numb with the thought that now at last "they" had actually got him. She said to herself, as she hung about the court, "But it is only his body they have got. They have got him bodily; but they cannot lay hands on his spirit."

It occurred to her that she ought at once to acquaint his mother with this news, but she felt that she must wait to see Christopher marched away by the soldiers. To have gone away would have seemed like deserting him.

The escort did not come until five o'clock.

When she had seen them depart, Christopher walking on the outer edge of the pavement with his coat flung over his shoulder, the escort walking in a friendly manner at his side, Jane turned away, and with a prayer to God for his safety, started off to see Mrs. Sterling.

She had eaten nothing since breakfast, and her breakfast had only been half-eaten, so that she was faint and weak when she reached Portman Square.

Mrs. Sterling was in the drawing-room, with Arthur and his wife. They had finished tea, but the things had not yet been taken away.

"You look quite famished, Jane," exclaimed Mrs. Sterling; "have you had any tea?"

"No; but I don't want any, thank you."

"What is the matter? Has anything happened?"

"They have taken Christopher."

Arthur, who had been looking Jane up and down as if she were some repulsive creature from another world, exploded with anger. "Upon my soul," he cried, "it's really too bad! I suppose we shall have it all in the papers to-morrow. It's intolerable. I wish to God religious people would sometimes think of the feelings of their own family."

He began to walk about the room.

Mrs. Sterling said, "Where have they taken him?"

"I don't know. We went to the police court together, and then the escort arrived and he was taken away."

Lady Louisa was very kind to this queer little sister-in-law of the slums who looked so meek and so shabby and so wretched. She said to her, "I am sure Christopher will be brave, and so you must be brave too, musn't you? I know you will be. Now let me advise a cup of tea."

Arthur continued to fume. "It's all very well," he said, "but this sort of thing is horribly unpleasant for us. Christopher doesn't think of that He thinks of himself, and now I suppose he is flattering his soul with the idea that he is a martyr. But this sort of thing means that one is chaffed in the club; that one's name is bandied about in the newspapers; that people smile when they meet one, and all that sort of thing. It's revolting."

Lady Louisa said to his mother, "I'll take him away and smooth him down." She shook hands with Mrs. Sterling and Jane, saying kind things to poor little Jane, and then going over to her husband, put her arm through his and took him off with her, looking back at the others from the door.

Arthur did not return to say good-bye. He was in a perfect fury.

When a fresh teapot had been brought, Mrs. Sterling, who up to that moment had been asking questions about the police-court proceedings, rather coldly Jane thought, relapsed into silence. She poured Jane out a cup of tea, and then sat back on the sofa, saying nothing. She was conscious of a feeling towards Jane of great hostility. It seemed to her that Jane had brought Christopher to this disaster. She had encouraged him in his fanaticism, and now when he was paying the penalty of that fanaticism, here she sat eating and drinking at her ease.

It was curious how this feeling of hostility deprived Mrs. Sterling of her usual good sense and her natural fairness of mind. No woman was less narrowed by snobbishness, and yet as she sat back on her sofa looking at this shabby little daughter-in-law at her tea-table, she was aware of social superiority, conscious of a solid disdain for her son's wife. She found herself bitterly blaming Christopher for having made this misalliance, as if it was his marriage which had brought about his downfall.

With this feeling of social distance went the feeling of intellectual superiority. She found herself measuring Jane's intellect contemptuously. What insolence it was for this little creature of the suburbs to set up her judgment against the whole world! How grotesque that she should presume to think she knew better than other people! What on earth did she know of science and theology? Imagine her in controversy with a man like the Bishop of Westminster — what a figure she would cut!

Jane, dimly aware of this feeling on the part of her mother-in-law, found it exceedingly difficult to get on with her tea. She was hungry and thirsty, but in this hostile atmosphere to swallow anything required an effort. She had to keep clearing her throat to prevent herself making ugly sounds when she swallowed. If she dropped crumbs in her lap, she felt guilty: and when she picked up those crumbs she noticed how red and rough were her hands. She had never felt natural and at her ease in this drawing-room, but never before had she felt so wretched and unhappy as she felt now alone with Christopher's mother.

Mrs. Sterling said to her at last, "Well, you have both chosen to set yourselves against the world, and this is what it has brought you to."

Jane could have cried.

"I confess," continued Mrs. Sterling "that I do not sympathize with Christopher's attitude in this matter, no, not the least bit in the world. It is one thing to

object to military service on religious grounds; but to object to any form of non-combatant service, in a time of the most critical national anxiety, seems to me illogical and provocative. There was no need for him to be arrested, no need for him to be taken to the police-court. People who might have respected him for his refusal to take a combatant part in the war will now condemn him as a mere fanatic. Many of course will call him a traitor. He refused to help his country in any way, even to assist the wounded. I call that incomprehensible."

Jane put down her teacup, and said very quietly, "But surely you will agree that Christopher is more consistent than the conscientious objector who undertakes non-combatant service?"

"No, I will not agree to that."

"But Christopher says he cannot take non-combatant service which releases another man to do the work which his own conscience will not let him do. He refuses to have anything to do with the whole machinery of war. It is not only the actual work of killing which he opposes. He opposes everything which makes war possible."

Mrs. Sterling regarded this demure little daughter-in-law with a complacent smile, as though almost amused at her absurdity. She said, "My dear Jane, you and Christopher have allowed yourselves to be mesmerized by words. You do not see any of the facts of life. You see them only in their literary expres-

sions—words on paper. Out in France Christopher's own brothers are exposing themselves to the shell fire of the enemy, facing death in order to save the freedom of the world from the most appalling form of despotism which has ever menaced mankind. Behind them are some of the greatest surgeons and doctors in London, who have sacrificed their practices, and their home comforts, to tend them when they are wounded. Everywhere in France you find self-sacrifice—the self-sacrifice of chaplains, nurses, social workers, and laborers. The whole manhood and womanhood of the country are up in arms to defend liberty and to share the burden of the conflict. These things are real. They cost life and limb. They are paid for in wounds and death. They save us from destruction. But you and Christopher see only a wordy formula in this struggle of the nations, and behind all the immense suffering and heroic self-sacrifice of your country, you cling to a fad. How you do not see the shame, if not the folly of your position, I cannot imagine."

Never before had Mrs. Sterling spoken to her in this fashion. Jane was so taken by surprise, and so hurt by the cruelty of the onslaught, that she could not find speech. It seemed to her that Mrs. Sterling was hard and unfeeling. She had always been aware of unsympathy towards her on Mrs. Sterling's part, but she had never dreamed that the kindness she had hitherto received at her hands was a mask for active hostility and personal dislike.

"Don't you think," asked Mrs. Sterling, in the tones of indulgence, "that it's rather presumptuous of you to set yourself up against the rest of the world? I mean, does it never occur to you that the grounds on which you believe your opinions to be more right than those of other people are entirely subjective?"

Jane looked down from the hard and accusing eyes of her mother-in-law and found herself regarding her own poor rough hands where they lay in her lap, expressing in some strange way a sense of guiltiness. "Each one of us," she answered, speaking very softly, "must be guided by the voice within."

"That's where the mischief is," said Mrs. Sterling. "The voice within is nothing more than our own consciousness, which needs to be watched, to be educated, and to be controlled, before we can trust it."

"Christopher and I believe," said Jane, raising her eyes, "that God speaks to those who love Him and desire to hear Him."

"How many people, do you suppose, believe the same thing? Think for a moment. Think of all those whose opinions are the direct contrary of yours, who yet say that God speaks to them. Don't you see how absurd that is? Why, the Turks believe that God commands them to butcher the Armenians. The German Kaiser listens to God night and morning. The churches in Germany, Lutheran and Roman Catholic, are full of people praying to the same God who tells *you* one thing and them another. There isn't a savage in the jungle

or the desert who does not think that he takes his commands from God."

"It is possible," said Jane, "for people to deceive themselves, but not if they obey the will of God. Obedience to the will of God opens the door of the heart to His guidance and His inspiration. Only a few obey."

Mrs. Sterling smiled. "My dear child, how are you to decide what is the will of God?"

"Christ is the Word."

"And how do you form your opinion of that Word?"

"From the Bible."

"Exactly."

"In the Bible the will of God is made manifest to men."

"The Jew has his Talmud, the Moslem has his Koran, and the Christians of every warring sect have their Bible—all books, my dear Jane, fallible books written by fallible men before the birth of science. However, it is no use arguing with you. You and Christopher are perfectly self-satisfied. You have chosen your way and you must go upon it. But, as a great student of the Bible, does it ever come across your mind that Jesus deluded himself, and that the end of his life, recorded in this very Bible, was the realization of his mistake?—you know what I mean, the cry from the cross. He expected God to act. He had told his disciples that God would act. One had only to pray, and God would answer. Would a father

give a stone to a son who asked for bread? Who could suppose such a thing? But when he cried to God in his extremity there was no answer—not even a mocking stone: nothing but silence."

Jane felt herself filled with an increasing fear. She saw in the eyes of Mrs. Sterling something more terrible than dislike of herself. She saw there a hatred of Christ, cold, intellectual, contemptuous. This hatred expressed itself in the tones of her voice. It was impossible not to feel that Mrs. Sterling bore towards Christ a hatred that came from the very depths of her heart. From such wickedness Jane recoiled with fear.

"This war," said Mrs. Sterling bitterly, "will make an end of Christianity. You are not likely to persuade people that God manages our affairs after such a ruin as this. You certainly will not be able to assert that He answers prayer. While the war lasts, no doubt, superstition will prevent people from speaking out. But after the war there will be no more Christ. You may be sure of that."

Jane uttered a little prayer in the silence of her heart, and then made answer, "You are speaking of a Christ I know nothing about, the Christ of the Churches. It will be good for humanity when men turn away from so false a Christ. But the Christ I know, the Christ I love, the Christ who lives, is he who binds up the broken heart, who hears the sighing of the contrite spirit, who comforts the mourner, who changes the evil heart, and who guides the feet of his

children into the way of peace. Not even war can drive this Christ out of the world. He has overcome the world. The world is his, and he will claim it for his own. Hate disputes his right to the world, but love is stronger than hate."

"How pretty it all sounds!—but how false to the facts."

Jane thought for a moment. Presently raising her eyes, she said, "You are very fond of James, aren't you?"

"Indeed I am."

"Do you never pray for him?"

"Never."

"I can't understand that. How can you bear to be parted from him?"

"Prayer would not unite us."

"I wish you would pray for him. It would bring him so much nearer."

"I am not superstitious."

"Don't you believe in God?"

"Oh, in something we know nothing about."

"How alone you must feel."

"But, as you see, I manage to support my loneliness. I find it is easier to bear a load when one is under no delusion that a ghost is carrying it for one."

"Why do you say it is a delusion?"

"That is my experience."

"You have prayed in vain?"

"Many times."

"But—when you prayed, did you love God with all your heart and mind and soul?"

Mrs. Sterling winced a little at this. "I'm afraid," she said, smiling almost agreeably, "that we shall never agree on the subject of religion. But my unanswered prayers do not seem to me so much to the point just now as yours. I suppose you have prayed that Christopher should not be arrested?"

"If it was God's will that he should not be."

"Ah, that makes all prayers rational."

"It makes them safe."

"You are quite satisfied with Christopher's present predicament?"

"I am quite sure that it is God's will he should suffer this persecution."

"Well, I hope your faith may support you while he is in prison. For myself I shall never cease to deplore the ruin of his life. He was a boy of exceptional promise. He won extraordinary distinction at school and college. He had the world at his feet. At this moment he might have been one of the greatest ministers of state. But he branched aside. He got among phantoms. And now, in the most critical hour of his country's fate, he is in prison. It dosen't seem to me a very satisfactory end to his life."

"But it isn't the end!" cried Jane with some vigor. "This is only the beginning of a work that with God's help will make a new world."

"In the meantime Christopher is in prison, and we

can do nothing to help him." Her face hardened. "It's that which makes me so angry. We can't help him. We can do nothing at all. They may ill-treat him, and we shall not hear about it. He may be ill, and they won't tell us. We can't even write to him. It will be weeks, or months, I suppose, before they allow any of us to see him, hear from him, or write to him. And his manner of life has been weakening him. He was never strong, and now he looks almost fragile. What will prison do to him? I feel as if . . . "

So much anger blazed into her eyes that Jane, who had been listening with a most unhappy heart to this prophecy of ill, shrank from it in astonishment.

"I was going to say," Mrs. Sterling continued, "that I could almost with may own hands tear Christ down from his cross."

Jane rose to her feet, and with a white face and a great fear in her eyes approached Mrs. Sterling, stretching out her hand in farewell.

"I cannot bear," she said, with quiet earnestness, "to hear you speak of our Saviour and our redeemer as I speak of Satan."

"He has ruined my son," said Mrs. Sterling.

"He will save my husband," replied Jane. Then, holding Mrs. Sterling's hand, she added, "I am not afraid. I shall not weep for him. I shall miss him and I shall think of him. But I shall never fear for him. Christ will share his prison cell. Christ will hold

his hand in the dark, Christ will speak to him in solitude. If you only knew the love of Christ! Ah, how I wish you knew the love of the living Christ."

Mrs. Sterling smiled as she listened to these impulsive words.

CHAPTER XI

THE POWER OF DESPOTISM

CURIOUSLY enough it was from Arthur that Mrs. Sterling received her first shock of awakening.

When it became known that Christopher had been sentenced by a district court-martial to one hundred and twelve days' hard labor, Mrs. Sterling remarked to Arthur that she felt more or less greatly relieved. "I was so afraid," she explained, "they would send him to penal servitude."

Arthur, whose attitude towards conscientious objectors had been slightly modified by the recently acquired knowledge that men of the standing of Lord Selborne, Lord Hugh Cecil, and Lord Henry Bentinck were opposed to the Government's treatment of these Quakers and Tolstoyians, informed his mother very gravely that she was much mistaken if she thought penal servitude a more serious punishment than hard labor.

He was so impressive and spoke with so much authority on this subject that both his wife and his mother listened to his exposition with a new interest in the man himself.

"A judge will send a man to seven years' penal servitude," he said, standing with his back to the fire, his hands behind his back, one of his legs giving now and then at the knee, "with far less unhappiness to himself than he will sentence another to two years' hard labor. In fact, two years is the limit of hard labor. The human mind breaks under it. It is a system of punishment aimed at the mind. In penal servitude the State is intent on keeping a man's body in its care; it aims simply at preventing him from committing crimes. But in hard labor its purpose is to terrorize the mind. It is rather well thought out from that point of view. It begins with solitary confinement. For ten hours of every day the convict works in absolute solitude, locked up in his cell. The work is not hard, which is part of the scheme for breaking down the mind. When work is taken away from him, he spends the other fourteen hours of the day in loneliness and idleness, with a plank bed, six feet by two feet and a half, to sleep on. This ten hours of solitary confinement and monotonous work lasts for a month, and reduces the convict to a suitable condition of subservience. After this, he is allowed to work for five hours of the day in the presence of other prisoners, but in absolute silence. For five hours he can gloat upon the spectacle of a lot of poor devils like himself, working in the windows of the prison, and then back he goes to his little cell for the nineteen other hours of the day. At the end of eight weeks he is cowed,

and if he has behaved himself properly and managed to suit his subserviency to all the moods of the warders who look after him, he is allowed to write a letter and to receive a visit of twenty minutes from not more than three friends. After this, if he is still obedient, he may enjoy the same privileges in six weeks' time, and after that once a month. But the whole spirit of this punishment lies in its almost unbroken solitude. The hour's exercise in the prison yard must be taken without one word of speech. The five hours' association work must also be done without speech. And so, throughout the term, a convict has to support the burden of his own mind, and that I am told is the worst burden the mind can carry. To be locked up in a little stone cell measuring some twelve feet by six feet, and lighted by one small window heavily barred and out of reach, to have no paper or pencil with which to write, and to have to do work which does not interest the mind, and is done often after a time quite mechanically, this is to suffer very considerable mental discomfort. In fact it is a commonplace of the law that a man who will take a flogging without one whimper will go down on his hands and knees, yelling for mercy, when sentenced to a few weeks of solitary confinement."

Mrs. Sterling went very white at this, and Louisa shook her head and frowned at Arthur, going to her mother-in-law, and saying, "I think Arthur is exaggerating a little."

Arthur said, "Oh, you mustn't think Christopher is going to break down under it; the doctors will watch that."

Mrs. Sterling said, "It is worse than anything I imagined."

She could not get out of her mind the vision of her son sitting in his cell, with his hands in his lap, his eyes on the floor. She saw him in a hideous yellow suit plastered with broad arrows, his hair cropped close to his head, his face gray with suffering and ill-health, sitting there hour after hour, in absolute loneliness. She was the last person to be sentimental or superstitious, but she dreamed one night, seeing him in this eternal posture, that he suddenly raised his bowed head and showed her in his eyes the fear of madness; and this dream haunted her for the rest of her life.

But Arthur's description of hard labor, made more effective perhaps by the detached spirit of its delivery, and also by his neat black coat, his dark trousers, his gaitered boots, and his general look of ease and prosperity, was her first awakening from a certain somnolence of soul which had fallen upon her ever since her encounter with Jane.

One day Mrs. Sterling was at tea with some friends when a lady of the company, speaking with enthusiastic delight, told her how an officer had said to her that they were giving hell to conscientious objectors in "making them wish they had never been born." Before her hostess could catch her eye, this happy

person went on: "Of course you know that they are taken handcuffed to France, and shot out there in scores. But that's really too good for them. What *I* appreciate is their treatment over here. They're locked up in prison cells till they go mad. Some have committed suicide, some have been let out just in time to die at home, and others have been transferred to lunatic asylums."

Mrs. Sterling said to herself as she walked home, "I begin to see what spirit it is in the world that Christopher desires to overthrow."

The gossip of this woman was true. Mrs. Sterling discovered that the Government was permitting persecution, and that under this wicked persecution men had died and men had been driven mad. She was too practical a person to lose her head over this discovery: she did not fly into a passion or begin to rage wildly against the Government; but her old love for Christopher sprang up again in great power from the depths of her heart, filling her soul with the determination that she would move heaven and earth to save him.

She began by speaking to her husband, who had rendered service to the Treasury and who was acquainted with all the chief ministers of the Coalition Government. She told him something of what she had heard, fearing to tell him all, and suggested that he should make inquiries in Downing Street.

Old Mr. Sterling was greatly distressed and greatly shocked by what his wife told him; he went to Down-

ing Street in a spirit of strong indignation. This old gentleman, who was so gentle, and playful, and affectionate, became like a lion when he heard of injustice or tyranny.

The minister on whom he called received him in the friendliest fashion, his face wreathed with smiles, a sort of festal jollity showing in his face. He shook hands heartily, cracking a little joke, and then invited Mr. Sterling to be seated. His face changed when the banker told him the object of his visit.

"Ah, that is a difficult question," he said, blinking his eyelids, pursing his lips, and shaking his head over it, "Personally I'm for clemency. I don't believe in making martyrs of these young men. But the matter is out of our hands. It is now in the hands of the soldiers. We can do nothing."

Mr. Sterling, sitting there with a very intent expression in his eyes, and leaning a little forward to hear what the minister said, started back and exclaimed, "But this isn't Germany! We are not ruled by our soldiers!" Then, coming forward again, he said, "If wrong has been done the guilt is yours; you are responsible, you and you alone. You must forgive my plain speaking. I will never submit to such a doctrine as you have enunciated. Why, it's—it's—it's treason to the constitution!"

The minister replied with an urbanity that seemed incongruous to Mr. Sterling, that plain speaking never needed an apology; he then went on to explain that

his colleagues were opposed to any interference with the War Office, and therefore the War Office had this matter in their hands with the sympathy of the Cabinet.

"You see, Mr. Sterling, the country is against the conscientious objector," he concluded. "I have taken some pains to acquaint myself with the state of public feeling on this subject, and I assure you that the country is dead against him."

"But is the country in favor of persecution?" asked the banker, rapping with his knuckles the table on which he leaned. "Does it wish to see these misguided young men treated as criminals, and treated worse than criminals? Is that the mind of England?"

"I would not say that," replied the minister, looking at the clock; "but I am certain the country is satisfied that the matter should be left in the hands of the War Office."

"All I can say is this," replied Mr. Sterling, getting up: "I shall not rest, whatever may be the consequences, till this scandal to the good name of England is removed, and I shall devote myself to this work by every means in my power, however long it may take." He put out his hand.

The minister was impressed. "Sit down for a moment," he said persuasively, and taking up a pen began to write. "I'm going to give you a note to the War Office," he said, writing as he spoke. "I should like you to see the people there, and discuss it from their point of view." He looked up, blotting the note with

two swift movements of his hand, and added, "Nobody will be better pleased than myself if you can change their opinion." With that he handed the note to Mr. Sterling, smiling for a moment, and then, with another glance at the clock, put out his hand in farewell.

At the end of the same day he was able to see a person of some authority in the War Office. From this amiable gentleman he learned that the matter was entirely in the hands of a particular general, and that this particular general had refused to budge an inch in his treatment of the conscientious objector, although the greatest possible amount of pressure had been brought to bear upon him.

"I cannot tell you for certain," said this official, "what is the attitude of the Secretary of State, but I have reason for saying that nothing on earth will ever induce him to take the matter out of the hands of General——."

"It comes to this then," said Mr. Sterling, scarcely able to believe his ears, "that the conscience of this country is in the keeping of a subordinate officer, and that the civil power acts as the office boy of this gentleman."

"Might I point out," replied the official, "that all attempts to work up an agitation on this matter have failed, proving, as I venture to think, that the country approves of the Government's action?"

"But do you mean to tell me," asked Mr. Sterling,

throwing himself back in his chair with the utmost astonishment, his eyebrows raised, his eyes staring, "that if the country knew what was being done to these men it would approve of such persecution?"

"I think the country does know."

"And I'm perfectly certain it doesn't."

While Mr. Sterling was engaged all that day in trying to get at the Government, Mrs. Sterling was making her *amende honorable* to little Jane. She did this in a manner characteristic of her frank and straightforward nature.

"We shall never agree about religion," she said, holding Jane's hand in her lap, her other arm round the little Quaker's shoulder, "and so, my dear, we will never discuss it again. I recognize that I spoke hotly to you on the day of Christopher's arrest, and I am thoroughly ashamed of myself for having done so. I said a great many things I do believe, and also a great many things I do not believe. Besides, I spoke much too crossly for a civilized person. I am very sorry, and you must forgive me. Yes, I know you do. You're a very forgiving spirit, and a sweet little person as well. We shall understand each other better in future."

She then told Jane what Mr. Sterling was about, and informed her of their intention to work for Christopher's release.

"I am afraid," said Jane, when she had listened in obedient silence to this narrative, "that Christopher

would not approve of your idea. I have seen him, you know, and had a letter from him."

"You have seen him? How does he look?"

"Well, he looks," she began, her head going down and her voice trembling, "very, very changed. But," here she raised her head, "his spirit is quite unbroken."

"Did he tell you how the soldiers treated him?"

"Yes; he wrote to me every day from the guard-room before his court-martial. He said his escort had been most kind and friendly. The only rudeness he encountered was from the doctor, who made coarse jests when Christopher refused to be examined, jests which disconcerted the young soldiers of the escort. The officer commanding at the depot was extremely kind in every way, and Christopher told me he has been much struck by the sympathy and refinement of mind he encountered in all the senior officers before whom he had to appear."

"Well, I'm glad of that. Tell me more about his experience in prison."

Jane's voice changed to a lower key. "It is dreadful in prison," she replied; "no words can explain how dreadful it is. I think it is the cruelest thing in England. It is not so bad for Christopher, because he is never quite alone, and he has always been used to meditation. But it is terrible for those unhappy men who have lived bad lives and who have nothing in their souls to keep them company. It makes them worse. It hardens their hearts. I am sure it must be far better

in Siberia, where prisoners may have their families with them, and where they work in the open, under the sky, among the flowers, and with animals to take care of."

"But you say Christopher looks changed?"

"So terrible is the system that even he has felt it," replied Jane. "It's the awful solitude. To be alone with yourself, for hours and hours, day after day, with no proper exercise, no proper food, and with no means of ever writing down your thoughts, always in silence, complete silence—it is this which destroys health. It doesn't destroy Christopher's soul. I'm sure it doesn't. He begged me to do nothing to effect his release, but to work all the harder for our cause. But it does affect his health."

"How does it affect his health? I mean has it brought on any particular illness?"

"He tells me he suffers from headache and pains in his chest. He cannot read very long before his head begins to ache—dreadfully. He told me that it is very difficult to eat the food. When he was first in prison he was told that if he worked well and finished a certain number of mats he would be given a cup of cocoa in the evening. He says that he worked like a galley slave in order to earn that benefit, but that his fingers become so lacerated and swollen that he never succeeded. He said he felt so famished that when he found he had failed it was as much as he could do to prevent himself from weeping. And then going to bed

so hungry he could not sleep; you see he had no mattress on the wooden plank until he had been there a fortnight; he used to lie awake with his torn and swollen fingers burning like fire and so hungry that his head ached as if it would burst."

"Jane, this is dreadful. We *must* work for his release."

"I am sure he would beg you not to do so. He seems so emphatic about that. He says his sufferings help him to enter into the far greater sufferings of Jesus, and that all they should do for us is to make us work harder for the triumph of our cause, which is the cause of Christ."

When Mr. Sterling returned home and found Jane with his wife, he was very much surprised, for he thought there was no hope of a reconciliation in that quarter. He would have been as glad as he was surprised to see them sitting together, if it had not been for the disappointment and indignation which filled his mind.

He greeted Jane, however, with kindness, if not with warmth, and then began to tell of his experiences with State officials. At the end of this narrative he said, "I shall write a letter to the papers, and if that is not a success I shall get questions asked in the House of Commons."

When his wife told him that Jane thought Christopher would be opposed to such efforts, the old gentleman replied, "On my honor I am not thinking of

Christopher. I am not sure I am thinking of any of these young men, I am thinking of the good name of my country."

He learned an exceedingly bitter lesson during the next few weeks. Most of the newspapers rejected his letter: those which did publish it cut it down to a few lines, put into small print, and placed it where no one was likely to see it. He called on the editors of one or two Liberal newspapers and reviews, and came away with the impression that Liberalism, if not dead in England, was at any rate moribund. He encountered no one really willing to risk circulation or personal popularity by advocating the cause of these persecuted Quakers, not even among those editors who most furiously assailed Germany for her persecutions in Belgium and Serbia.

He was not more successful among politicians. He found two or three who shared his views, and who promised to do something in the matter "when occasion offered," but for the most part members of Parliament replied that questions in the House only led to a fresh crusade for persecution from the jingo newspapers, while some, hitherto famous for their philanthropy, told him point-blank that they had no sympathy whatever with these miserable faddists.

Jane brought good news to Portman Square during this crusade. She had heard from Christopher, telling her it was almost as good as certain that he would earn a reduction of eighteen days from his sentence.

"Of course," said Jane, "the military authorities will take him again when his full sentence is over, but he says we shall have these eighteen days together and that makes him happy in waiting for the time to pass."

This news led Mr. Sterling to abandon his efforts for the time, although he was just on the point of writing letters to the archbishops and bishops, asking them to make a church protest against this scandalous persecution of religious people on the part of the State. He thought it would be best to discuss the whole matter with Christopher.

Eighteen days before the expiry of his sentence, Mrs. Sterling and Jane, who had spent the night before in a local hotel, drove to the prison gates, and telling the cabman to wait for them, went inside to welcome Christopher and to carry him away.

When she saw him, his mother could not repress a cry—so emaciated was he, so gray, so bowed, so broken. He smiled at sight of her, and put out both his hands, and exclaimed in a hoarse voice, "This is better than I expected!"

After they had greeted, he said to his mother, "I hope you didn't think me rude for keeping on my hat. I thought you would hate to see my cropped head. I expect I look hideously ugly."

"Nothing matters now we've got you," she replied.

"Eighteen days of the sky and the air, and the living world!" he exclaimed; "isn't it splendid?—isn't it too good to be true?"

They passed out of the gate, Christopher in the middle, the women with a hand through his arms, he looking first at one and then at the other, so glad to have them near him, so happy to be free.

"When the war is over," he said, "we must work to change our prison system: it's so silly, and so cruel. I think God let me go to prison that I might."

A corporal stepped up to him, a paper in one hand, a rifle in the other. Two private soldiers, carrying arms, were standing by the cab.

"Are you Private Sterling?" asked the corporal.

"My name is Christopher Sterling."

"I arrest you as an absentee," said the corporal, and with a movement of the hand summoned the guard.

As they marched up, Mrs. Sterling exclaimed: "But you can't arrest him! His sentence is not yet served!"

Christopher said to her, "The Army can do anything."

"It is monstrous!" said Mrs. Sterling. "It is infamous!" she cried, and her face was white with indignation.

Jane clung to Christopher's arm, trembling from head to foot. He turned to her, bent down his head, and whispered, "Kiss me, little Jane, and be very strong and very patient."

"Fall in!" said the corporal. And then, "Quick march!"

CHAPTER XII

LAST WORDS

CHRISTOPHER'S second court-martial resulted in a sentence of two years' hard labor. This time there was no commutation. He would have to serve the full sentence—the extremest form of punishment meted out by English law to the most determined criminals.

Furthermore, contrary to the spirit and custom of English law, he was being more severely punished than ever in his previous sentence for one and the same offence.

While he was serving this sentence James came home on four days' leave from the front, and spent almost every moment of the time in working for his brother's release. He saw ministers and politicians, professors, writers, bishops and clergymen. He received sympathy, but no help. He learned in confidence from a noble scholar that a petition was to be drawn up and presented to the Prime Minister, and that until this was done the cause he had at heart would best be served by silence. He gathered that every sympathizer was afraid of the newspapers. The great

dread was a campaign on the part of the press aimed to intimidate those who might otherwise sign the petition.

On the last night of his stay in England, James said to his mother, "They tell us we are fighting Anti-Christ in Germany, but here in England they have taken Christ and put him in prison."

He said to his father and mother, "Work for Christopher's release. I believe it is right for me to fight against the Germans. I believe it is right for Christopher to stand out against war. And of this I am more certain than of anything else that Christopher is as near to the heart of Christ as the very worst of the Germans is far away from it. War is hell. Believe nothing you read in the newspapers about our cheerfulness at the front. There's not a man there who doesn't loathe war from the very depths of his soul, and when men are free to write the truth about it the whole world will loathe it too."

To Mrs. Sterling every word uttered by James was charged with a meaning which clung to the beatings of her heart. Each parting from this well-beloved son was an agony; every time he left her she was sensible of a greater and a colder loneliness. Christopher had come back to her, but there was room in her heart for both these sons.

She began to wonder whether there was not also room in her heart for the two moralities of Christ—for the morality of the saint, and for the morality of

the knight-errant. Although she found it impossible to regard the Christ of the churches with any feeling of reality, she came more and more to be conscious of a reality which had escaped her in Jesus.

There were times when it flashed into her mind that perhaps Jesus was right, that perhaps, in very truth, the one way out of the miseries of the world was the way which he had trodden—the way of Love, a love changing the heart of man, transcending his human nature, a love which really did believe in God, a love which really did reach out so wondrous far as to include a man's neighbor.

She was too old to change, too set and efficient to leap forward with a heart of faith into the light of a new vision; but the thought of Jesus as a Reality, the thought of his teaching as the Truth, haunted her thoughts and would not let her rest.

She was further influenced in this direction by a deeper intimacy with Jane. After the second arrest of Christopher, and again after the brief interruption of James's leave, she cultivated the society of Jane with an affection and a respect which increased as intimacy ripened. She used to go down to the tenement, and would there take part in the humble ritual of Jane's life, mixing with the neighbors, learning to see life from their angle of vision, admiring them for their courage, marveling at their virtues, and understanding how Christopher had loved to give himself to these brothers and sisters, these multitudinous chil-

dren of England and of God. She got out of the habit of calling them "the poor," and never used the word "slum," which Christopher and Jane both held as a harmful effect upon the people who live in working-class quarters. She did not speak, as Christopher and Jane spoke, of "the oppressed," but she called them "our neighbors," which was a considerable advance towards the standpoint of her son.

One dark night, returning from a visit to Jane, she was groping her way to the front door of the house in Portman Square when the voice of her husband called to her from a few paces away.

"Anthony!" she exclaimed, peering into the darkness; "is that you? Why, what on earth are you doing here?"

"I've been waiting for you," he said. "Give me your hand."

"But where are you going?" she asked.

"Let us take a little walk," he replied; "just once round the square. Slip your hand through my arm."

They had taken but a step into the darkness when her heart froze with the very coldness of death.

She stopped, and pressing his arm with her hand almost angrily, said, "You've had news — from France?"

"Let us walk, my dear, let us walk," he said, his voice shaking.

She pressed closer to his side, walking forward with him, and asked, "Is it of James?"

There was a long time before he replied. Then he said, "Yes, dear, news of James."

It was wonderful how all the tumult of agony in her heart, all the panic of apprehension, left her at a stroke.

"Is he wounded?" she asked, "or is it worse than that?"

Her voice was quite even and controlled.

She waited aching for the answer. No answer came. She felt the arm of her husband shake violently as though with a palsy, then she heard him weeping and sobbing. He walked faster, fighting down his sobs.

She said to him, "There is no word for this, Anthony."

A burst of sobbing came from the old man.

She said, "We must be brave. We must hold our heads up."

"My Partner!" he exclaimed. "My darling precious angel Boy—my Partner!"

The greatness of his grief helped the mother to control her own.

"I am glad you told me in the dark," she said quietly. "It was kind of you, Anthony, to wait for me. I hope, my dear, you have not taken cold. Let us go back now. I am quite ready to face things. How long had you been waiting for me?"

"I forget, I forget. A long time, Elizabeth, every moment of it a memory which broke my heart into pieces. I felt I could not take you indoors. I thought

perhaps I could do it easier in the dark. Don't let us go in for a minute. I shan't take cold. Let us walk round the square for a little longer, and talk about it till we're used to it. I don't think I could look in your eyes quite yet."

The death of James Sterling, that most gallant soldier, who fought always with fear at his heart, nausea in his brain, and an effort in his soul which only the purest devotion can understand, plunged the small struggling light of his mother's faith into black darkness.

Everything in that faith drifted away and became unreal to her—the thought of a God who literally cared for humanity, the thought of Jesus as a serious person in the evolution of mankind, the thought of Christopher's life and Jane's life as a contribution to the destiny of the world; these drifted away like phantoms.

All was unreal beside the immeasurable reality of this awful death.

He had left among his papers two letters written six months before he was killed, one for his mother and one for his father. To his father he expressed gratitude for all the love which had been poured into his heart from earliest childhood, speaking of his father's "lavish generosity and quite wonderful self-abnegating love," thanking him for all this "splendor of love," saying that it was for this he was so glad to die, if God willed. He begged his father not to mourn for him, and concluded:

"When the war's over, Langton will have had his fill of soldiering, and I would suggest that you take him in the bank. He's as fine a specimen as I have never met of what we call the English gentleman—so unassuming, so fearless, so direct and firm, so cleanly moral, so sensible of duty. And since Christopher's renunciation he is your eldest son. Take him into the bank and love him as you have loved me. I shall still be somewhere about, waiting to ask you how the War Loan stands, and to inquire if the quantity theory of money has made more converts. Think of me as alive, think of me as waiting for you, think of me as your sleeping partner."

The package which enclosed the letter to his mother contained a sheaf of poems which he had written in France. He asked her to read them and if she thought they were "fairly good" to publish them: "for," he said, "they express all that burning part of me which is so willing to die for England, though my knees may knock, and my face go as white as the snow on the parapet." He went on to say:

"I want these poems to be an answer, so far as they can, to the cynic who will say in years to come that England went into this war for base motives, and that the neutrality of Belgium was only an excuse for her to attack the most dangerous of her trade rivals. I don't say that politicians may not have had some such idea as this: but

politicians have not done the fighting. England in this war is represented by her young men, and those young men, I'll stake my life for it, have had no cunning lie in their souls from first to last. They have given their lives, and suffered many terrible things, for the noblest ideals of man's soul —for liberty, for justice, for kindness, for chivalry towards women and children, for a better world. For our own cause is summed up in the word England—and this word includes you, my mother, who brought me into the world, shielded me from all baseness, led me to love beautiful things, and filled my heart to overflowing with the rapture of life. I have been so glad to live. I have enjoyed life more than language can express. And now I am quite ready to die; and if my death, as I pray it may be, is a quick death and a clean, most contentedly will my spirit pass on to the next stage of God's existence, there to wait for you with both arms stretched wide till you come."

In this letter there were a few lines about Christopher, reiterating James's faith that there are two moralities, and avowing his conviction that he and Christopher were fighting for the same victory. "The Government," he said, "insists on treating Christopher as steel, and would hammer him into their shape; but Christopher is the leaven of Christ."

For three months Mrs. Sterling shut herself from

the world. The light of her faith was almost extinguished, and she walked in a darkness which she welcomed because it seemed to isolate her from mankind. She could not have borne in that darkness the little tapers of consolation which a host of friends were so eager to place into her hands. She read none of the letters which reached her. At King's Standing she went about the fields and gardens, remembering the days that were gone; in London she was always in his room, opening cupboards, lifting blinds, pulling out drawers, handling the things which had belonged to him, things which he had touched or worn. She took elaborate pains to see that his posthumous poems should be beautifully published.

Outwardly she was perfectly calm, going about her business as of yore; while she was in Surrey she superintended, with all her old capacity, some quite considerable alterations in the gardens, entering into the details with a thoroughness of interest which seemed as if she thought of nothing else. She astonished her husband by her self-control. He came to look at her with a new admiration, a new reverence. He told himself again and again that she was wonderful, more so than he had ever imagined her to be.

Her chief anxiety seemed to be about Sibyl in Yorkshire, who was almost distracted by the thought that war might not be over before her eldest boy was of military age. If Mrs. Sterling was concerned about anything one would have said it was her daughter.

The truth is that darkness and despair have a certain great strength of their own, and that negation can bear itself more staunchly in the face of calamity than a faith which is merely an inspiration.

Mrs. Sterling told herself that James was dead, dead for ever. She did not look to see him again. She did not believe that he existed in any form or in any place. The child of her body was as dead as the roses of summer, dead as the dogs whose gravestones were in the shrubbery behind the stables, dead as everything which had once lived and then had died.

There was no room here for a broken heart. In her darkness one had only to go on, expecting nothing, hoping for nothing, just doing one's duty and hiding one's useless pain.

A letter from Jane, while she was busy with her garden in Surrey, reminded her of a duty she had neglected. Jane wrote to say that in the following week she was going to see Christopher in prison, and asked if Mrs. Sterling would like to go down with her. The letter concluded, "I have never mentioned anything to him about dear James, and I will leave it to you whether he should be told next week by you, or by time."

Mrs. Sterling decided that she would go and see Christopher, and that he should not be told about James's death.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WONDER THAT REMAINED

ON their way down in the train, Mrs. Sterling asked Jane to tell her what she knew about Christopher, saying, "I fear I have been selfish these last few months."

Jane replied that her mother-in-law must prepare herself for a great change in Christopher's appearance. She said: "He is condemned to spend the whole of this sentence in solitary confinement, and although his spirit is not shaken in the least, his body is breaking down under it."

Mrs. Sterling was horrified by this disclosure.

"Christopher is making a stand," said Jane, "against prison rules. When the first month of solitary confinement had passed, and he was permitted to work with other prisoners, instead of whispering to them furtively when the warder's back was turned and as the other prisoners do he spoke in his natural voice and in the presence of the warder. For this offence he was taken before the governor. He explained to the governor that the prison rule of silence teaches men to be deceptive, because they must speak and so they speak in

whispers when no one is looking, which is morally bad for them. The governor was extremely kind; he almost begged Christopher to do as the others do; he said he did not want to punish him, but that if he spoke aloud he would be obliged to do so, which would mean keeping him in solitary confinement. Christopher thanked him for his sympathetic attitude, but said he could not practice deception, and must make his protest against an inhuman regulation."

Jane opened her bag and took out a letter she had received from Christopher, handing it to Mrs. Sterling. "There is a passage here," she said, pointing it out in the letter, "which shows how wonderfully his spirit is supporting this dreadful torture."

The passage she referred to, which made a great impression on Mrs. Sterling, ran as follows:

> "It is very difficult, but I find it becomes easier as I make the effort, to love our enemies, to love those who apparently hate God and live in defiance of his laws. The Germans have done such terrible things. They have brought upon the world this awful calamity. They have sown the seed of hatred over the whole field of Europe. They have degraded human nature. And with this, they still make use of God's name, and drag down the holiness of heaven to serve their propaganda of hate. But I have lately been trying to see the Germany that God sees, the Germany which the Divine Father has included in the fam-

ily of mankind, and for which our Saviour was content to die—the Germany of children and toys, of fairy stories and Christmas festivals, of beautiful legends and lovely music, of frugal domestic happiness and moral earnestness. When I think of this Germany I see how foolish is our propaganda of hate, how foolish and how wicked; and I also see how the future peace of the world must depend upon the propaganda of love in each country—such a propaganda as the Emergency Committee is doing here in England by their work of mercy, and the Quakers in Germany are doing there in ministering so kindly and lovingly to our English people living in their midst. You will see how true this is, if you imagine what the state of the world would now be were all our English newspapers and all their German newspapers telling people of the love and kindness which exist in each country. Only a little imagination is needed to show that a propaganda of hate is of the Devil, and that a propaganda of love is of Christ."

After she had read these words, Mrs. Sterling closed her eyes, and for some minutes remained so quietly in thought that Jane imagined she was sleeping. But presently she opened her eyes, and handed back the letter, looking at Jane with a new and penetrating interest.

"I wonder," she said, "if he is right after all? Perhaps he is. It is possible. Who shall decide?"

When they had traveled some distance, Jane opened her bag once more and took out a little brown book, passing it to Mrs. Sterling. "I think you might like to look at this," she said; "it is compiled by the mother of Stephen Hobhouse, who is also in prison; it is an appeal for justice."

Mrs. Sterling took the pamphlet; it was called, "I Appeal Unto Cæsar," and sitting back in her corner of the carriage, began to read it.

The first thing that struck her was a sentence in the Introduction, written by Professor Gilbert Murray, who disclaimed sympathy with the pacifist arguments of conscientious objectors. The sentence ran: "The main question which concerns our honor as a nation, is whether we wish to act like sensible men or like angry fanatics—without any excuse for fanaticism." This seemed to her the sensible position. Then she came across the words: " . . . these men have by the plain intention of the Act a right to total exemption, the whole of their punishment is in spirit illegal."

She reflected on these words. "Yes," she told herself, "their punishment is illegal and that punishment is persecution."

Then she read of brutality on the part of soldiers to these defenceless victims.

> "I have received by this morning's post (June 30) the accounts of one man, an intended missionary, dead in hospital, another dead in a lunatic asylum, as the result of this secret bullying; and

a third being subjected to a well-known form of mediæval torture. This man is imprisoned in a deep and narrow hole, too small for sitting down, not to speak of lying, with no roof overhead and water at the bottom, covered by two planks."

Another passage that remained in her mind was this:

"However wrongheaded, conceited, self-righteous, and unpatriotic, and all the rest of it the objectors may originally have seemed to us, the long and fruitless and illegal persecution of these men leaves on the coldest observer an impression of some moral heroism on the side of the culprits and some moral and intellectual vileness on the side of the oppressors."

She looked up and said to Jane, "Yes, that is the impression it leaves — the impression of moral and intellectual vileness on the side of their oppressors— vileness, horrible and un-English vileness."

But the greatest effect produced upon her mind by this pamphlet came from the letters of men in prison, men like her own son, letters which helped her to realize what Christopher was suffering under our infamous prison system. She read two letters which haunted her mind long after she had closed the book, and which came between her and her sleep that night when she lay down in the bedroom of her hotel. These were the letters she read:

"One hundred and ninety-five days of stitching, each of twenty-three hours and fifty minutes'

silence. I think the greatest torture of enforced and perpetual silence is the never-ceasing consciousness of thinking in which it results. You cannot stop thinking for an instant. And if you seem to, it is only to listen intently to the beating of your heart drumming in your ears. You cannot escape thinking about the most trivial matters of routine. I think of the very knots in the boards each time I scrub them, until I could scratch them out of the floor to rid myself of their arrogant insistence upon themselves. One inevitable result is a consequent and hopeless inability to think of those very things that are your interest, and would stimulate and hearten you . . . And then I seem to have no way of escape from dwelling upon the horror of the war, and just because I cannot be active, my imagination is the more vivid, until I am driven almost to the breaking point of despair by thinking of all the agony of the world . . .

"I have seen a man go raving mad in the prison after being shut up in a warm cell from 4 o'clock in the afternoon until 6 o'clock next morning. The cells are very badly ventilated; the one I was in had all the windows fastened down so that they were a fixture. Some cells have got two little windows out but some have not, and it gets very hot in there; especially when the sun is beating in, it gets unbearable. I have seen cell doors opened in the morning and the men stretched out

on the floor in fits or fainting, and the warders do not take any notice of them but simply pass on and leave the door open. It really is very brutal. Men in the first stage are kept in the cell and not let out, only for three quarter-hours early in the morning from 8.15 to 9 o'clock, and it is more than you dare ask to go out of your cell for anything for the first month, so you can just tell what it is like to be so closely confined this hot weather."

On the next day, haunted by what she had read and suffering from her sleepless night, Mrs. Sterling drove with Jane to the prison for their interview with Christopher. She was quite silent during this drive, sitting forward on her seat, looking out of the window of the cab with her face turned away from Jane, never altering her position till the prison was reached.

Jane thought that perhaps she dreaded the experience of a first visit to a jail, and took her arm as they passed through the gateway. But Mrs. Sterling walked firmly, and when she spoke it was in her usual tones.

When they entered the visiting-room, she was astonished and indignant at the arrangements she found there, so that she cried out, "This is monstrous, infamous, abominable! But what does it mean?"

The room was divided into three compartments, or cages, by strong closely-woven wire netting. The visitors were in the first cage looking into the other cages beyond them, each with a door in the wall.

Jane said, "He will come into the farthest cage, and a warder will sit between him and us in the center cage, and Christopher will talk to us through the wires."

She had hardly finished speaking when a door admitting to the cage farthest away from them was suddenly opened and Christopher appeared there, a warder almost immediately making his entrance into the central cage.

The light in the room was dim; the double thickness of wire netting had the effect of gauze; it was not easy to see with clearness.

It may be that Mrs. Sterling's nerves, after her great shock of three months ago, were unstrung, that her past knowledge of her son's condition had added to this state, and that this novel and disconcerting experience of a first prison visit was a final strain upon those suffering nerves; but whatever the cause may have been, seeing Christopher approach through the gloom to the wires of his cage, a feeling of extraordinary uncanniness overwhelmed her whole nature, filling her heart with a sense of great awe, so that her body shook and her spirit was paralyzed.

She felt, as she stood there, gazing through the wire, that she was in the presence of Jesus.

She felt that this same great awe which held her whole being must have been known to all those who stood for the first time in the presence of Jesus. It seemed to her as she watched this approaching figure through the mist of the wire, that one had come to her

from another world, one whose thoughts were not as her thoughts, whose ways were not as her ways, whose ears had heard the voice and whose eyes had seen the glory of God.

The repulsiveness of his prison garments, with his number at the breast, did not strike her; nor was she conscious of his cropped head and unshaven face—not even of the frightful weakness of his body. She was aware only of his eyes. Into those eyes, looking at her through the wires, she gazed fascinated and awed, unable to speak, held spell-bound by some power within them which seemed to be not of this earth.

A brightness came into his eyes when he recognized his mother. He said, "This is great happiness, great happiness!" His voice was very low, like a hoarse whisper, and yet had a deep ring which made it vibrate through the room.

He looked at his wife and said, "How glad I am to see you," smiling at her. Then he turned again to look at his mother. For a moment he was silent, Mrs. Sterling could hear the beating of her heart. "You are in mourning?" he inquired.

She had forgotten that. The shock of this question helped her to the recovery of her faculties.

"I have bad news, Christopher," she managed to say; her voice was lower than his, about as hoarse. She fought for control, and then told him the news.

He looked tenderly, almost reproachfully into her eyes and said very gently: "But that is not bad news,

mother; it is good news." Then with greater firmness: "He has been lifted out of the battle and taken away from the horror of the slaughter-house. His suffering is over. The mind's great agony has ceased. He is at peace."

The word "peace" sounded like a chord of music.

She made no reply, but nodded her head as if to say that she understood.

"Think," he said quietly, "how his beautiful spirit must have suffered on the battlefield. How often that pure heart of his, so innocent and so lovely, must have cried out at the sights he saw, the pitiful moans which cried in his ears. He bore it all for the sake of his ideal, but it wounded his soul. It hurt him to the quick. And standing in the midst of the carnage, hating it, agonizing under it, but doing his duty without one sign of fear, suddenly it all vanishes away, become as if it had never been, and this young knight of England finds himself standing among the knights of God, on the glad hills of everlasting peace. Ah, it is good news you bring me—good, good news. I shall go back to my cell to thank God for this happiness which you have brought me. For, I can tell you now, I have often suffered great grief in my solitude, thinking of the far greater sufferings which that lovely spirit was enduring on the battlefield."

"Christopher, my darling," she said imploringly, pressing herself against the bars, and straining her eyes to him, "is there nothing I can do for you—nothing

at all? Won't they let me do anything for you?"

The warder, sitting between them in the center cage, moved on his chair, and coughed in a manner intended to warn Mrs. Sterling that she must restrain herself.

"Mother," said Christopher, "they cannot prevent you from praying for me. Pray often. Pray earnestly."

She tried to make him see her answer in her eyes. That answer was the surrender of her spirit to God. Henceforth she would pray. Yes, she would pray with all her soul.

He said to her, "There will be a great work for us to do when the two years have passed—many doors to be opened, many walls to be broken down."

"I understand, Christopher."

He smiled at her, and then turned to Jane and began to ask her questions concerning their neighbors, particularly the Pommers. He was just about to turn to his mother again when he remembered something more he had to say to his wife.

"I woke up this morning," he said, "thinking of that little bird who sang so sweetly to us on the morning when we were dreaming of our holiday. Is it still there? does it still sing?"

"Yes, Christopher."

"Look out of the window to-morrow and give it my love. Tell it that I too am trying to sing in my cage. I hope it will still be there when I come out."

The warder took out his watch. Christopher turned

to his mother. "Will you tell my dear father, with my love, that I often . ."

"Time's up," said the warder in a sharp voice, and rose from his chair.

A few months after this interview Jane received one night a letter with the familiar postmark of the prison town on the envelope. It was written with a strange hand and at sight of it she was visited with a terrible fear that Christopher was dead. She uttered a prayer to God, closing her eyes for a few minutes, and then, with hands that trembled, opened the envelope.

The letter, which she could read only with the greatest difficulty, and which looked as if it had been written by a very old man scarcely able to hold a pen, was from Christopher himself. It told her that he was in the hospital, and had been there for three weeks. It consisted of but a few lines and ended with a postscript telling her that it had taken him half an hour to write them. "It is only Body that is weak," he concluded, "Spirit holds out still."

Jane set out with this letter to Portman Square. The thought that he was so desperately ill and that the prison authorities had told her nothing about his illness was more even than her faith could bear. Such cruelty seemed to be inexpressibly wicked.

She found the family at dinner. Arthur and his wife were there, Arthur dressed in khaki with green facings. He had made things quite safe for himself now, and in the morning was starting for Paris with

one of the ministers—an important mission full of mystery.

Jane's news made them all very indignant. Arthur, who now felt himself to be of the Army, declared that soldiers were dead against this senseless treatment of conscientious objectors. "They ought to be treated," he said, "as political offenders, not as criminals." His wife was equally indignant, but repressed this indignation in order that she might sympathize with Jane. She took Jane's hand and held it, leaving the others to talk.

Old Mr. Sterling, who had grown exceedingly shaky during the last five months, said in a trembling voice that he would have this thing stopped if he had to die for it. He started up from the table and went out of the room, sobbing. Mrs. Sterling followed him.

Jane was not allowed to see Christopher till the regulation day for her visit came round; worse still, she was not allowed to receive any tidings of him. Those were days hard to bear for the little Quakeress.

Mrs. Sterling had now taken up her husband's work. She woke every morning at six and worked till midnight, writing to people, going to see people, conducting a campaign of her own while she worked at the same time with others seeking the same aim as hers. The end of it was that the Government became a little alarmed. They did nothing, but hints were dropped of something to be done very soon. Mrs. Sterling was told in confidence, great confidence, and on the highest

authority, that if she would keep quiet for a few weeks she would be rewarded by her son's release; she was also warned that if she carried her campaign any further the bloodthirsty newspapers would certainly begin a counter-campaign, the result of which would be to tie the hands of the Government.

Old Anthony Sterling, hearing this, exclaimed, "That I should live to see the day when the Government of this great country is afraid to do right—afraid to do right, because of a press for which every educated man must feel nothing but an unbounded contempt! What had been Gladstone's attitude to such a state of things as this? Why, even that fellow Stead would have fired the country against such tyranny. Either there is no leadership in our statesmen or no liberalism in the nation. I begin to feel that I belong to an England which has passed away."

Whether by secret instructions from the Government or whether because the prison authorities feared to have another death on their hands, Christopher was suddenly released, with no preparatory warning of any kind, a few days before Christmas, 1917.

He was taken by his mother and his wife to King's Standing.

There was no hope of his recovery. It was now only a race between death and insanity.

One afternoon, lying in his bed with his face turned to the windows, against which a snowstorm was beating, he said to his mother, "Some one long ago declared

that Force is not an attribute of God. I remember thinking of that in prison. I had no paper or pencil to write down my ideas. But I remember now something about them. Have you ever thought what symbolism there is in the unfinished state of creation? There are collisions in the starry heavens. On earth there is roughness, barrenness, upheaval, and monstrous unshapeliness. God might have made the world all beautiful, with no ugliness anywhere, no violence, no storms, and no destruction. But to do that He would have had to employ force. Instead He created elements, gave them energies and direction, and then withdrew His hand, leaving the world to make itself. He never uses force. Isn't that beautiful? 'Reason is but choosing,' said Milton. We are free. We choose our way. And then Christ came into a world that was living by force, which employed force in striving to crush the free spirit of man into a mould, and he said, Resist not evil, love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you, love one another. Truly this man was the Son of God. Truly he alone is descended from our Creator, the Almighty who never uses His almightiness."

He became rapidly worse as Christmas approached, so that Mrs. Sterling telegraphed to his brothers, both of whom were in France, and also to Sibyl in Yorkshire.

It was characteristic of Langton that he changed into mufti before entering Christopher's room, charac-

teristic of Arthur, perhaps, that he should have worn his new khaki in that room—a uniform which was now brightened by the ribbon of a French decoration.

Christopher was too far gone to observe these things, but on the last day of his life he put out his hand to Langton and showed that he knew him, saying, "You must take care of them,"—meaning, as they thought, his parents.

Mrs. Sterling was watching with him at night just before the end came. She went to Jane, who was sleeping in the adjoining room, and then went round the house to summon the others.

They came into the room carrying their candles, and stood about the bed with them in their hands, so that the deathbed was like an altar.

He was dying in great bodily distress, the eyes closed, the teeth set, the breathing hard and terrible. Every now and then his mother leaned over him and wiped the sweat from his forehead. The wind made a deep roaring sound in the chimney.

Just before the end his breathing became quiet and he ceased to grind his teeth.

Then he opened his eyes, looking about him as it were in astonishment.

Some of the watchers shielded the candles' flames with their hands.

He tried to lift himself on his pillow, and looked from one to the other with great earnestness.

Then he let himself slide down in the bed, closing

his eyes again, and said quite distinctly, so that they all heard him, "James is here too—nearer than you are, much—nearer."

When he had ceased to breathe, Langton put his arm round Jane and led her away. He said to her at the door of her room, "Christopher died for England, and for something even greater than that."

In the small hours of the morning Langton was disturbed by a noise in the house, and getting up and lighting his candle he went out in the corridor to see what it was.

A light was moving in the hall, and he walked to the head of the stairs, standing there and looking down. His mother was approaching the stair-case, carrying a lantern and basket filled with flowers which she had brought from the greenhouse. She came nearer and he saw that there was snow on her hair and on her dress.

She smiled, seeing Langton, and said, in a low voice, "Come and see him. He looks so beautiful."

They went into the room together, and stood by the deathbed, holding each other's hands and looking down at Christopher.

After a long time she said, "What is it that's so wonderful in his face?"

Langton said, "I think it is Peace."

THE END